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THE EARLIEST EDITIONS
OF THE HEBREW BIBLE
BY LAZARUS GOLDSCHMIDT

WITH A TREATISE ON THE OLDEST
MANUSCRIPTS OF THE BIBLE
BY PAUL KAHLE

ALDUS BOOK COMPANY · NEW YORK 1950

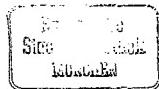
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GOLDSCHMIDT / THE EARLIEST EDITIONS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE
KAHLE / TREATISE ON THE OLDEST MANUSCRIPTS OF THE BIBLE

INITIALS BY ALICE GARMAN
PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS



In the literature of the world a special place is held by the book which is familiar under the name Biblia, THE BOOK; more exactly the Book of Books, or even the Holy Books of the Ancient Covenant. As hardly any other book on the face of the globe, it has been translated into the tongues of all peoples, provided with a manifold variety of commentaries and spread abroad in an infinite number of editions. In the sphere of art, too, it has proved an incentive, and the greatest masters of the palette and the chisel have found in it a source of inspiration for the unfolding of their roaming imagination. Everyone knows the Bible from his school days, and many are familiar with its contents. Its historical and cultural significance, which has left its mark on the moulding of both hemispheres, would lead to the assumption that everyone knew a little about its appearance in print: yet this is not the case. The educated man knows, indeed, from his knowledge of history that the art of Gutenberg saw its inception with a Latin Bible in the middle of the XVth century. Yet what layman knows when the original text appeared for the first time? Not even the bibliophile knows; although a non-Jewish expert, Count Giacomo Manzoni, asserts in his enthusiasm for the book that the first edition of the Hebrew Bible is the most precious book on earth. Significant is a "Catalogue of World Literature" by the well-known German bibliophile Eduard Grisebach, which I have in front of me, where the chief editions from the entire field of literature from earliest antiquity to the present day are enumerated and which contains exhaustive information, too, on the literature of the Near and Far East. Of the Hebrew Bible, however, only the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes are mentioned: both editions from the end of the XIXth century.

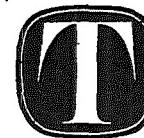
The Holy Scriptures are no longer the property of their creators, the Jews, in whose midst they originated; non-Jews have become the custodians of the Bible and it is Christian theologians who are carrying on research and are spreading its teachings. In the same way the first editions of the Hebrew Bible, both of the whole as well as of sections of it, printed by Jews and for Jews, migrated from Jewish ownership to that of non-Jews. All the copies that have come down to us have been preserved as the property of non-Jews or of non-Jewish libraries. Not

one was to be found in Jewish possession; hardly one in a Jewish library. Only in the most recent times have collectors been successful in effecting a change of possession, and even then only in the case of a few copies. Until the most recent times these editions were unknown even amongst the Jews, although the later editions are innumerable. In his Chronicle, which appeared in 1592, the Jewish chronicler David Gans reports that in Venice in the year 1511 (correctly 1517) Daniel Bomberg set up the first press for the printing of the Holy Scriptures. Amplifying this statement, the well-known biographer and bibliographer Azulai, who on his travels throughout Europe browsed through the largest libraries, explains that this applies only with regard to the Bible and that other Hebrew works had already been printed half a century earlier. A Bible edition dating from that early period, however, he did not know, although he often mentions rarities from Jewish libraries in Italy, his home.

It is thanks to a number of scholars and collectors of the last century in Italy that to-day our knowledge on this subject has been considerably extended; only, however, in the field of bibliography without the least influence in the realm of bibliophily. The zealous bibliophile knows, indeed, the first edition of an obsolete or obsolescent poet; even peculiarities of the printer and misprints that have been overlooked are familiar to him. Yet who knows anything about the first edition of the Bible in its original language? Who knows a Hebrew Psalter that followed close upon the heels of the first Schoeffer Psalter? There is hardly any one who knows that these old prints are also full of valuable material for the study of wood-cut illustration which is adapted to the Hebrew type but bears the influence of its period and environment.

When the following lines were written they were intended for the bibliophile; but also the bibliographer and the student of incunables will find extensive and detailed information on everything that pertains to the subject of their interest. Not least, it may also be the friend and scholar of the Bible who will welcome what is offered here; especially the informative treatise on the oldest manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible by the pen of the well-known Bible scholar and the foremost authority on the Masora, Prof. Dr. Paul Kahle.

London, June 1946.



THE high esteem which the text of the Bible enjoyed amongst the Jews and its large significance in the liturgy of the synagogue would lead to the assumption that it was the printing of this work which saw the inception of Jewish typography, and that its reproduction offered an opportunity for success and profit to the pioneers of the Hebrew printing press. But no. Since the year 1474 authentic Hebrew printers — or, more accurately, printers of Hebrew works — were active in various parts of Italy¹ and produced works from the most diverse branches of Hebrew literature. Exegesis, ritual and law, even philosophy, ethics and history are represented. No-one, however, thought of the Book of Books: no-one dared to approach it.

An almost parallel situation is to be found in the course of Gutenberg's development. He, too, did not begin his activities with his chief work, the Biblia Sacra, although at his time it was certainly the most widely read and most saleable work. The parallel, however, is confined to the events; it does not extend to the causes that led up to them. While the precursors of the Biblia, the very small Donata and the Letters of Indulgence which are hardly worthy of mention, and even the debateable Missale Speciale — if it may be so entitled² — which came to light half a century ago, were all only experimental activities of the press prior to the actual printing of the chief work, no such reasons are to be found in the case of the Hebrew Bible. Far more comprehensive than the Bible text are those Hebrew works that left the press before it. The four-volumed Turim of Jacob ben Asher — one of the most extensive works of the incunabula era —, which was only intended for a small circle of experts, had already appeared twice³. The Rome prints, too, of the extensive codices of Moses Maimonides and Moses Kozensis are shown by

¹ Reggio di Calabria, Piove di Sacco, Rome, Mantua, Ferrara.

² A whole spate of opinions, both for and against, was published on the authenticity of this typographical monument.

Cf. Rosenthal's catalogue CV (Incunabula) No. 1.

³ Complete Piove di Sacco, 1475; of the edition started by Conat and continued by Abraham ben Chayyim only the first two parts are known.

the primitive state of their types and their composition to be almost certainly products of an earlier time.

Or could the reason have been that there was a large number of Bible texts in circulation, so that their mechanical reproduction did not seem to be worth while? This, too, was not the case. It can be seen that among the Hebrew manuscripts preserved in public libraries or in private collections it is just the Bible manuscripts that constitute the rarest items. Although church censorship and persecution of the Jews resulted in a considerable decimation of Jewish rabbinical books while Bible manuscripts, which were never listed in the Index, were afforded a comparative amount of protection thereby, the latter constitute a far smaller number than other works in the entire field of Jewish learning.

There is, it is true, the possibility that the composition of the Bible text was beset with technical difficulties¹. It is almost exclusively provided with vowels and accents. The few unvocalised editions are not intended to be used for normal study and are meant for other purposes. In actual fact two editions of the Pentateuch without vowels appeared at this time in Spain where the printing of Hebrew books made a later start. It may be for the same reason that during the first decade of Hebrew typography no editions of the prayer book or of other liturgical writings are known, in spite of the fact that there must surely have been a great demand for them. This is possible but hardly probable. Die-sinking and the casting of types were known and already in use, and there was nothing to prevent the composition of mixed grades, of types and vowels.²

The real reason why no-one trusted himself to approach the typographical reproduction of the Biblical text lies in the religious awe which this Holy Book inspired. Even if the Bible texts which were produced for the purpose of study were not required to reach that standard of exactness, care and punctiliousness which is still practised to-day in the preparation of the Scrolls of the Law for use in the synagogue, nevertheless it might have been regarded

¹ As can be seen from smudges in various places, the oldest types were cast on a full shank on top so that the signs above the letters, such as points, circles and abbreviation-marks, had to be set in

the space between the lines but had no body. Later they, too, were cast on a full shank and the vowels were set as a separate line directly below the letters.

as profanation to reproduce the Holy Text by mechanical means by which it was robbed of its dignity, stripped of every vestige of individuality and reduced to the degrading status of a mass-produced article. No doubt the same considerations applied to the liturgical works that were intended for divine service. Only a single Selicha for the fast-days—not ranking as an equal to the daily prayer-book—was already printed; also without vowels, in the earliest days of Hebrew typography³. Although I am not at the moment in possession of documents to prove it, it is fairly clear that the professional scribes, who saw their livelihood threatened by the printing press, were eager in their opposition to this “profanation of the Holy Text”.

Like every opposition in the path of progress and invention, which often obliterates with a rough hand what the spirit of man and the industry of his hands have created, the tenacious adherence to the old and long-established handwritten Bible could not hold its own in the face of the competition of Gutenberg's art. Already in the year 1477 the first Biblical book left the press in Bologna in an edition of 300 copies. It need hardly be mentioned that it was a Psalter with the production of which many other languages, too, commenced their printing activities. As printers the postscript names “Meister” Joseph Veneri, Chayyim Mordechai and Chiskiya de Ventura. Already the designation “Meister” proves that at least one of the three partners was German. Also the character of the script suggests a German origin, a fact that can be established in the case of all other early Hebrew prints although they have been printed in Italian cities. There is one exception, although also printed in Italy, where the type indicates a Spanish origin⁴. A detailed description of this rare first Bible print is given by TYCHSEN⁵; the value of the text is described by DE ROSSI in his *Annales*⁶ and in greater detail by GINSBURG in his *Introduction*⁷. Suffice it to say here that the text, printed in a small square type with few exceptions unvocalised and

¹ Piove di Sacco c. 1475.

² The first edition of Yizchaki's commentary to the Pentateuch, which at the same time is supposed to be the first Hebrew print, is the only book that was printed in Italy with Spanish type.

³ EICHHORN's *Repertorium für Biblische und Morgenländische Literatur*, Vol. V, pp. 134—158.

⁴ *Annales Hebraeo-Typographici Sec. XV*, Parmae 1795, p. 14 sqq. ⁵ *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical edition of the Bible*, p. 780 sqq.

unaccented, is accompanied by the commentary of David Kimchi printed in rabbinic type; that the book comprises 153 unpaginated printed leaves in small-folio; and that its printing was finally concluded on the 29th of August 1477.

I consider that a small Psalter edition in 16mo comprising 63 leaves of 19 lines each must be regarded as belonging to the same period. It is printed with the same rabbinic type and otherwise, too, bears all the marks of a first print. Strangely DE ROSSI¹ and SACCHI² mention two editions of this little Psalter without place or date. The details, however, which are mentioned in the case of each of the two editions cited — the number of lines, the chapter numbers in the margin, the colophon, the chapter index and the grace after meals at the end — are all to be found in the facsimile copy before me³.

It would seem that the printers of the first Biblical text did not meet with any outstanding success: no further products of their press are known. It is not until half a decade later, on the 26th of January 1482, — provided the next edition mentioned did not appear earlier — that the most important part of the Bible, the Pentateuch, together with the well-known Targum of Onkelos and the no less well-known commentary of Solomon Yizchaki leaves the press of Abraham ben Chayyim de Tintori in the selfsame Bologna in a stately folio volume of 219 printed unpaginated leaves. The text, now progressed so far as to be provided with vowels and accents, is printed in a large square type of no specific character which nevertheless comes near to the customary type cut for the Spanish-Portuguese prints. Targum and Yizchaki are in the small rabbinic type of the first-named printer which may well have been taken over by de Tintori.

One single complete copy, another badly damaged by the binder, and a fragment are known of a vocalised Pentateuch edition which certainly belongs

¹ Op. cit. p. 128.

² *I tipografi Ebrei di Soncino*, Cremona 1877, p. 50.

³ The rabbinic type of this Psalter edition is similar to that of the Psalter, 1477, and the Pentateuch, 1482. As it is also a Psalter edition it is ascribed by some bibliographers (*Thesaurus Typographiae habraeae saeculi XV*, A 14) to the printer of the former and 1477 is given as the year of publication. The trained eye, however, can see without

difficulty that the types of the first two editions differ slightly from each other — the N in the two editions is completely different — and the type of our little Psalter corresponds exactly with that of the 1482 Pentateuch, so that there can be no doubt that both prints are the work of the same printer and probably appeared at the same time. It is also improbable that in addition to one Psalter edition a second one should have been printed in a new composition.

to the oldest products of the printing press. The large-quarto volume of 192 leaves has an exhaustive colophon which provides a great deal of information that is immaterial to the bibliographer on the subject of the printer's illness and travels. Also the names of the various participants, printers and compositors are listed. No information, however, is given about the year and place of publication. The term מוציא חותמה for compositor is no doubt one of the oldest and is no longer in use in later times. The bizarre types — both the larger one for the text as well as the smaller one for the Targum — are to be found only in two other works dating from the infancy of typography: the first edition of Maimonides' Mishne Torah and the Psalm-Polyglot, Genoa 1516; of which the latter is printed in Italy and the former — even if without foundation — is generally known as a "Rome print". Also the name of one of the participants, Ahron d'Este, indicates Italy. The following arguments may serve as further proof that it was printed in Italy and not in Spain or Portugal as FREIMANN¹ asserts. While all Spanish-Portuguese prints, whether in square or cursive type, have the same character — being probably cut after local manuscripts —, the oldest Italian types, until the introduction of Soncino's standard types, show variations which indicate that they were cut from drawings. Furthermore, all Spanish-Portuguese prints have a complete colophon giving the place and year of printing, almost always accompanied by a poem. A few exceptions have no colophon at all or had one which they have subsequently lost. The early Italian prints, on the other hand, frequently mention only the names of the printers without any reference to the place or year of printing. So much to convince the title-page scholar. The real expert does not need such proofs. He knows rather that all Spanish-Portuguese prints of the Targum are provided with accents — not only the Jewish prints but also those of Christian origin as, for instance, in the Psalter, Genoa 1516, which is not the case in this edition. The real expert, too, does not have to rely on water-marks and the thickness of the paper, which are not decisive factors². He examines the text; and a comparison of Bomberg

¹ *Thesaurus typ. hebr. saec. XV*, B 40.

² Three different watermarks — six, with the variations — are to be found in the oldest print, the

42-lined Gutenberg Bible; and conversely some works of different printers produced in different places have the same watermark.

1524 with the Biblia Regia, the representatives of both recensions, reveals that on the only page which is offered as a facsimile in the *Thesaurus* (B 40, 1) the Targum has about a dozen variations which all correspond with the Italian texts. A description of this edition is given by SPANIER¹ and, in greater detail, by FREIMANN²; both, however, only for title-page scholars.

The year 1483 sees the inception of a new era in the sphere of Hebrew typography. In that year the family of printers, the Soncinos³, originating from Germany, commenced on a large scale their work of disseminating Hebrew books by means of the press. The types cut by maestro Minardo di Lugo which they introduced—both the square as well as the cursive, or so-called rabbinic, type—remained an exemplary prototype and customary up to the most recent times when certain scholars with insufficient knowledge of Hebrew palaeography who had never concerned themselves with the science of handwriting sought, in an attempt to create an effect, to improve on and “better” the square letters so sentimentally praised in song by Heine⁴. The first production of the press established in Soncino by Joshua Solomon Soncino in the year 1483 was the first Talmud tractate Berakhot with the customary commentaries. It was only after further attempts with several books of a smaller scope that on October the 15th, 1485, the second volume of the Old Testament, the Former Prophets, appeared, as there was probably no longer any demand for the first volume, the Pentateuch. The beautifully printed small-folio volume⁵ consists, together with two leaves which are left blank, of 168 leaves which are unpaginated but are provided with sheet numbers; a progressive step introduced by Soncino. The text is in square type without vowels or accents;

¹ *Soncinoblätter*, I p. 77.
² *Ibid.* I p. 12 sqq.

³ As GERSOM SONCINO informs us on the title-pages to his editions of DAVID KIMCHI's *תעלות מילא* (Constantinople 1533) and ELIA MISRACHI's *בבבון נבובן* (Constantinople 1534), the family originates from Speyer. In the same place he also mentions that one of his ancestors fought against Capistrano in 1474 and drove him from the town. Copyist after copyist has transcribed this name as *Fürth* (in central Franconia) without knowing in what high esteem Capistrano was held in that region, a fact which his young contemporary SCHEDLER can already

report in his Chronicle (Nuremberg 1493) fol. 249, and that this town was still called *פִּירָט* by the Jews until the last century. Those who have some knowledge of history will know that Capistrano's defeat occurred in the Turkish war, so that only the town of Pirot on the Turko-Serbian frontier can be meant by that name.
⁴ Jehuda ben Halevy I.
⁵ In some copies leaves with a smaller type for the text are to be found, which, however, does not allow the inference that a second edition was reprinted. Variations in the composition occur in many of Soncino's prints.

the commentary of David Kimchi being in rabbinic type. The beginnings of the books are adorned by frontispieces which are composed, in the renaissance style, of decorated initials cut in wood, embellished figures and beautiful ornamental borders. The third volume of the Old Testament, the Later Prophets, consisting of 294 leaves, appeared undated, but probably immediately afterwards, in the same textual and typographical get-up, but without frontispieces, in place of which the omission of the initial words provides room for illumination by hand.

The apparently progressive use of frontispieces, which are unknown to the oldest Italian prints before Soncino, by no means warrants the assumption of an earlier appearance of the Later Prophets. In the first place the postscript to the Former Prophets—the Later Prophets do not have one—makes no mention of the Later Prophets, and secondly in his Bible published later Soncino also employs wood-cut initials in some books while they are omitted in others. It is possible that the pictorial representations proved unacceptable to Jewish circles and gave offence in certain quarters or were at least regarded as profanation of the Holy Text. Nevertheless, Soncino uses the same ornamental figures in his later edition of the complete Bible.

While Soncino was applying his industry to another far more worthy undertaking—the edition of the fairly extensive prayer-book, a small-folio volume of 320 leaves in two volumes intended for a large public that promised a large sale—another printer forestalled him with the edition of the fourth volume of the Old Testament, the Hagiographa.

In 1476 Joseph ben Jacob from Gunzenhausen—who was obviously a German Jew—established a press for Hebrew books in Naples which he opened with the printing of the Hagiographa which had not hitherto appeared in print. It appeared in three parts from 1486 to 1487. Similar to the Soncino Prophets in format and get-up with a type of the same grade and cut, this work has a vocalised text without accents and its own ornamental border cut in wood specially for this edition. With regard to the sequence of the appearance of the individual volumes, which are provided with special sheet numbers, there exists some confusion through which I cannot see my way with clarity. The first part consisting of 118 leaves, the Psalter with David

Kimchi's commentary, is dated the 28th of March 1487. The second part consisting of 194 leaves, containing the Proverbs of Solomon with the commentary by Immanuel ben Salomo — probably altered intentionally to Immanuel ben Jacob because of the bad reputation of his Macamae¹ — is undated. The 8th of September 1486 marks the completion of the third part of 150 leaves consisting of the following books: Job with Levi ben Gerson's commentary, the five Scrolls with various commentaries, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemia and the Chronicles with the commentary by Yizchaki. The dates would therefore lead to the conclusion that the Psalter appeared last, a reason for which could be the fact that a printed edition of this book was already in existence and that the printer only afterwards decided to publish this book as well for the sake of completeness. This, however, is only an hypothesis; and one that is negatived by the postscript to the Psalter. The proof-reader expressly describes it as a first work, promises better revision in the "books following the Psalms" and implores divine assistance to enable him to complete the entire Hagiographic collection. To obviate these apparent contradictions one must consequently assume that the Proverbs appeared first and that the description "first work" refers solely to the activity of the proof-reader.

To the Portuguese Jews fell the distinction of having introduced the art of printing into their country². In fact Hebrew printing was in progress in various parts of Portugal at a time when amongst their Christian neighbours the demand for the dissemination of literature by the press did not yet appear to be felt³. A Pentateuch produced in Faro which was commissioned by Don Samuel Gacon left the press on the 30th of June 1487. The small-folio volume of 110 leaves contains only the text without vowels or accents and also reveals no signs of progress from the typographical point of view: no catchwords, no pagination, no sheet numbers. The first letter of the first book is surrounded

¹ In spite of the fact that it was banned and was actually forbidden to be read (cf. KARO, *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayyim*, 307, para. 16) this book, with its vulgar obscenities, was printed twice during that early period; by Gersom Soncino in Brescia in 1491 and by his son, Elieser, in Constantinople in 1535.

² In Faro, Leiria and Lisbon the Jewish presses were the first; similarly Guadalajara and Ixar in Spain, and Piove di Sacco, Regio di Calabria, Soncino, Casale Maggiore and Barco in Italy.

³ The first non-Jewish print appeared in Lisbon in 1495.

by an ornamental wood-cut while the other four books have no ornaments at all.

Earlier than in Portugal, Jewish presses were active in Spain. The prints known date from the year 1482, but it was not until from between 1487 and 1490 that the first text of the Bible left the press of Elieser ben Abraham Alantanasi in Ixar. It is a Pentateuch with Haphtaras and the five Scrolls printed without vowels in a large-quarto volume of 191 unpaginated leaves. The text is split into two columns of 27 lines each; the beginnings of the individual books have ornamented initials and the Song of Victory at the Red Sea has a border of exactly the same type as those of the later prints from Lisbon and Salonica.

A large-quarto volume of 135 unpaginated leaves with two columns to the page dated 1487, containing the Later Prophets without vowels, which had until then been unknown to bibliography, was discovered by a bibliographer a few decades ago in Pesaro. According to the investigations of the discoverer and his detailed, but not satisfactory, description¹ it appears that this work did not originate from the aforementioned press but is a continuation of it, probably identical with the fragment described by DE ROSSI². As opposed to the previous volume this one may be described as a particularly successful typographical achievement.

The merits of Joshua Solomon Soncino would have been incomplete had it not also fallen upon him to be the first publisher of the complete Bible. That work left his press for the first time on Tuesday, February the 23rd 1488, in the arrangement and get-up which remained a prototype for all subsequent editions. The small-folio volume printed, with few exceptions, in two columns of 30 lines contains the complete text of the Bible with vowels and accents. If MANZONI³, in his somewhat too detailed description of this edition, calls it the "most valuable" book in the world, that statement can be ascribed to the exaggeration of an enthusiast. Nevertheless some further information about this book seems appropriate also here.

As the five Scrolls do not form part of the Hagiographa but are grouped

¹ *Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie*, XXIII, p. 36.

² Op. cit. p. 145.

³ *Annali tipografici dei Soncino*, Tomo II, 152 sqq.

with the Pentateuch, the work falls into four parts provided with special sheet numbers. This process had already been used by Soncino in the earlier printing of the Prophets, probably to make possible a division of labour. Consequently the Pentateuch consists of thirteen quires of which eleven have four sheets each and two three sheets. The five Scrolls, forming a separate part, consist of two quires, the first of four and the second of three sheets. The Prophets comprise twenty-three quires, twenty-one of four, one of three and one of two sheets. The Hagiographa, finally, fill eleven quires, eight of four and three of five sheets. The last leaf of each part remains blank, so that the whole volume numbers 380 printed and 4 blank leaves, which explains why the statements of bibliographers vary between the figures 380 and 384. The separate parts begin, like many other of Soncino's products, on the second page of the first leaf. The first page remains blank and serves as a bastard-title. With the exception of Deuteronomy, Judges, Samuel and Kings the individual books begin with the well-known Soncino wood-cut initials, while in the case of those four books a blank space is left for the first words for manual illumination. This is not the place to go into the correctness and textual importance of this edition. Those who want information will find it in GINSBURG's *Introduction*¹. I confine myself to the remarks that the sequence of books does not differ from our modern masoretic editions; that the books consisting of two parts, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles as well as Ezra and Nehemia, are not divided; and that the twelve Minor Prophets form one book under the common title "The Twelve". Reuchlin's personal copy is to be found in the Hof- und Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe.

Wolf Heidenheim, who has a high reputation for his editions of correct texts, possessed a "Pentateuch with the five Scrolls, Soncino 1488 in folio"². It appears, however, that the work in question is the first part of the above-mentioned Bible. A separate edition is unknown, and its existence improbable.

A third Spanish edition of the Pentateuch appeared in 1490 in Ixar. There is no actual mention of the printer, but it is probably a product of the already mentioned press of Elieser ben Abraham Alantanasi. The initials are the

same as those of his previously mentioned earlier edition, although the text is printed in a type of a smaller grade. The 264-leaved volume with catchwords, commissioned by Solomon ben Maimon Zalmati, contains the text and Targum in a smaller type, but without vowels, and the commentary of Yizchaki in the well-known Spanish type of a larger grade, similar to that of the Leiria prints. The Ixar Pentateuch edition is praised as extraordinarily correct by Joseph Karo¹, although it is impossible to tell without an accurate examination which of the two editions is meant.

The decade reaches its conclusion with a small-quarto volume of 123 unpaginated leaves which appeared on the 12th of December 1490 in the press of Joshua Solomon Soncino, who transferred his printing establishment to Naples in that year. The little volume contains the Psalter on 74 leaves, the book of Job on 26 leaves and finally the Proverbs of Solomon on 23 leaves. The printer is not mentioned in the colophon, but according to bibliographers it is supposed to have come from the press of Joshua Solomon Soncino. A detailed examination, however, reveals that the form of the type does not correspond with his. Also the border on the first page, although cut after that of Soncino, was used at the same time by a printer in Naples.

All Bible editions up to that time and, as DE Rossi says with some exaggeration, all prints of the XVth century, are put into the shade by the elegant and splendid large-quarto edition of the Pentateuch which left the press of Elieser Toledano in Lisbon in August 1491. The work falls into two parts of which the first contains the books of Genesis and Exodus on 216 leaves and the second the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy on 240 leaves. The unvocalised text, provided with accents, is printed in a beautifully large type of Spanish-Portuguese character; the Targum, also vocalised and accented, in the same type of a small grade; and Yizchaki's commentary in a magnificently cut rabbinic script of Spanish-Portuguese character which is an exact replica of the manuscripts. Although making the work of the compositor more difficult in view of the many ligatures and embellished and interwoven letters, it gives pleasure to the eye of the artistically-minded reader.

¹ Op. cit. p. 820 sqq.

² Katalog der Bibliothek Heidenheim, Rödelheim 1833, No. 6.

¹ In his commentary נקף משנה to Maimonides, Yad חורה הלכות סדר תורה section 8, para. 4.

Not only, however, by virtue of its get-up does this Pentateuch enjoy pride of place, but also because of its textual accuracy. The well-known textual critic YEDIDYA SOLOMON NORZI¹ describes it as a "correct Portuguese print". In contrast to the Italian prints, which are followed by later editions, oriental manuscripts, which differ from those current to-day, were used in the preparation of this edition. The Targum has special appendices² added to it which are not to be found in any other editions except in a re-print produced two decades later which I discovered only about a quarter of a century ago; later, however, I also found traces of them elsewhere. Of that edition (Salonica 1513) more will be said later.

This Pentateuch edition is one of the greatest rarities, and only few libraries can count it among their possessions. The Berlin State Library, too, had the ambition to give it a place in its catalogue, and according to a notice in a bibliographical journal³ it is supposed to possess the most complete and most beautiful copy. But the copy which that library cites as such is nothing more than a Pentateuch pieced together from several *later* editions and contains *not a single leaf* of the Lisbon edition.

Not only the Spanish-Portuguese prints of the Pentateuch enjoyed the highest reputation for accuracy amongst Jewish scholars, but also the manuscripts from which these and the scholarly polyglots were printed. The glossator of Maimonides⁴ and Joseph Karo, at the place cited, repeatedly stress the fact that these manuscripts are authoritative and decisive. I have already pointed out elsewhere⁵ that also in the case of the Talmud the Spanish manuscripts are the most reliable and correct.

In the very same year 1491 a vocalised and accented Pentateuch appeared also in Italy in the press of the "Soncino Sons" in Naples. The large-quarto volume, which contains the commentary of Yizchaki, distinguishes itself neither by its get-up nor by its contents. The pretty ornamental borders and initials which it contains were used at that time in many other Italian prints and also elsewhere. The only innovation consists in the fact that the book is

¹ The only Jewish editor of a Bible text with a textual-critical commentary, Mantua 1742-44.

² Also printed later in the early Salonica prints under the appellation נְבָנִים.

³ *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, XIX p. 113.

⁴ פָּרָשָׁת מִצְרַיִם at the place cited in MAIMONIDES.

⁵ Introduction to my edition of the Cod. Hamb., p. XI.

paginated and has column titles. Apart from the five Scrolls and the Haphtaras at the end, the well-known story of the Maccabees under the title "The Scroll of Antiochus", which no other edition had contained previously, is also included.

Surpassing all Bible editions not only of that but also of later times in artistic and typographic beauty is an edition without place or year which, however, according to type and ornamentation, came from the press of Joshua Solomon Soncino in about the year 1491 or 1492. The first pages of the individual parts are adorned by the beautiful border of Ayolphus di Cantono, and the book beginnings have magnificent initials which were evidently not cut for this work. The small-folio volume of 433 paginated leaves contains the text of the Old Testament with vowels and accents. This edition, too, is printed, with few exceptions, in two columns of 30 lines, and its contents reveal no variations worthy of mention. More detailed information about the arrangement and importance of the text — for the discussion of which this is not the appropriate place — is given by DE ROSSI¹ and GINSBURG².

A special off-print from this Bible edition is the Pentateuch with Haphtaras which appeared at the same time in a smaller format. The composition is exactly the same, only the pages are three lines shorter and the reglet between the columns is narrower. The Haphtaras are a new composition which I have unfortunately not seen in the original, while the facsimile A 98,2 in the *Thesaurus* offers nothing more than a bad reproduction of a paltry medley of unconnected lines.

Elieser Toledano's magnificent Lisbon Pentateuch of 1491 did not have to wait long for a successor. Already one year later, in 1492, the books of Isaiah and Jeremia, with the commentary of DAVID KIMCHI, left the press. The large-quarto volume of 248 leaves is printed in the same style and with the same type. The first letters of both books are surrounded by the same wood-cut border.

The large-quarto edition of 60 leaves of the Proverbs of Solomon with the commentary of David ben Solomon ibn Yachya without mention of place or date — printed in the same format, the same get-up and the same type at

¹ Op. cit. p. 139 sqq.

² Op. cit. p. 847 sqq.

about the same time — no doubt also came from the press of Elieser Toledano in Lisbon.

The best-known and most successful of the Soncinos, Gersom ben Mose, or, as he later called himself, Girolamo or Hieronymus, the nephew of the first editor of the Bible, who led a veritable nomadic existence so that we meet him in eight Italian and later in two Ottoman cities, transferred his press, founded in Soncino in the year 1488, to Brescia in about 1491. There, after an attempt with works from the realm of profane literature — the *Macamae* of Immanuel ben Salomo published in 1491 and Isaac Sahula's Book of Fables which appeared at the same time — he dedicated himself, in the main, to the printing of the Bible. On the 23rd of January 1492 he published a Pentateuch with Haphtaras according to the Franco-German rite and the five Scrolls provided with vowels and accents. The octavo volume consists of 217 unpaginated printed leaves of 26 lines and three blank ones. It is the first handy edition for use at home and in the synagogue.

This edition of the Pentateuch appears to have met with particularly big success because already in the next year, on the 10th of January 1493, he publishes a second edition which hardly deviates from the first. In the postscript to both editions Soncino lays stress on his German origin by calling attention to his German appellation Menzlan (or Menzelan) Shuncin. It is impossible to say whether the name has any connection with that of the printer of the first German Bible in Strassbourg in 1466, Johann Mentelin¹.

After this success it is understandable that this energetic printer ventures upon a larger undertaking: a complete edition of the Old Testament in the same format and get-up. This edition with the pericope dating from the second half of May 1494 consists of 586 unpaginated printed leaves in small-octavo, 26 lines to the page, with the Psalms, as in almost all subsequent editions, in two columns. A detailed description of the arrangement and the textual importance of this beautiful handy edition is given by DE Rossi²,

¹ Gabriel ben Ahron, a fellow worker of Joshua Solomon Soncino during the initial period of his activity as a printer, also came from Strassbourg, the most famous seat of the typographical art in

Germany during the incunabula era. Still earlier his brother, Joseph Chayyim, was a corrector in Bologna.

² Op. cit. p. 99.

GINSBURG³ and LUZZATTO⁴, who also gives some information about the copies that have been preserved. I cannot see, however, that its "great interest" lies in the fact that Luther used it in his translation of the Bible⁵; his personal copy is to be found in the Berlin State Library. It is certain that he did not use this edition for textual criticism, not even with regard to the sequence of books. He chose it only because it was handier and probably more easily and more cheaply obtainable. And if there were all three editions from which to choose, even to-day every-one would ask for the latest one.

A special print from this edition is a small edition of the Psalms in 32mo comprising 164 leaves of 13 lines concluded on the 16th of December 1493. Although dated earlier than the Bible edition, it can be seen from the exactly corresponding composition that it is an off-print, each column being split up into two pages; only its conclusion preceded that of the complete Bible.

Another edition of the Pentateuch without place or date may still be mentioned of which only a single copy is known which is in the Laurentiana in Florence⁶. The quarto volume of 190 unpaginated leaves, with few exceptions in two columns, of 32 lines contains the Pentateuch, the Haphtaras and the five Scrolls without vowels or accents. From the concluding remark "revised after the Hillel codex" it may be inferred that it was intended to serve as a copy for scribes of the Torah. The square type is primitive and resembles neither the German, the Spanish nor the Italian. Like the type so, too, the composition is bad and uneven. There are no variations in the general picture of the print and no widened letters to fill in gaps in the composition. If primitiveness and excessive width of the reglets are to be regarded as indications of old age this may be a product of the incunabula era.

The last place in which a Jewish press was established during the XVth century was Leiria, a small town in the Portuguese province of Estremadura. It was set up shortly before the expulsion of the Jews, and its existence was short-lived. Only two books of Biblical contents are known to have come from this press. Type, composition and print give the highest degree of satisfaction and do not fall short of the standard set by Toledano in Lisbon. A

¹ Op. cit. p. 871 sqq.

² *Hebräische Bibliographie* (STEINSCHNEIDER) I, p. 41.

³ GINSBURG, op. cit. p. 880.

⁴ Cf. *Zeitschrift f. hebr. Bibliographie*, VIII, p. 141.

large-quarto volume of 226 leaves, unpaginated but with consecutively numbered sheets, containing the Book of Proverbs with the Targum of Jonathan ben Uziel — both with vowels and accents — and the commentaries by Levi ben Gerson and Menachem Meiri left the press of Don Samuel d'Ortas in Leiria on the 25th of July 1492. It is true that in the colophon the year טזנ — 1497 according to Christian calculation — is mentioned, but as that is far too late for Portugal, the final ט is regarded by bibliographers as denomination for the thousands as if often the case in old prints and manuscripts¹. It is strange, however, that the printer should have commenced his activities with a book that left the press at the same time, or shortly before, in Lisbon, even if with different commentaries. As the ט at the beginning of the word in question has a point above it one could assume that this is an indication that the letter was a prefix necessitated by the context and was not to be counted, especially as not only the one word but the whole sentence from Is. 35,10 is quoted. This, however, is unlikely as the first of the month of Ab, which is mentioned as the day of completion, falls on a Saturday in the year 1495.

An extensive large-quarto volume of 620 unpaginated leaves with similarly numbered sheets in the same format and get-up left the press in the year 1494. It contains the Former Prophets with the Targum of Jonathan ben Uziel, both with vowels and accents, and the commentaries of David Kimchi and Levi Gersonides. The name of the printer is not actually given, but type and composition indicate the same press as that which produced the previously mentioned work. This edition is extremely rare, and a complete copy has only been discovered in the most recent times.

As in the case of the Spanish-Portuguese prints of the Pentateuch, also in the Spanish-Portuguese prints of other books of the Bible and the Targum², as well as of other works, the most correct manuscripts were always employed and the greatest care was taken to ensure correctness, so that alterations

¹ Cf. ZUNZ, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, p. 221 sqq.

² The care that was employed in the printing of the text can already be seen from the fact that in the Complutensian Polyglot the Targum is printed

only for the Pentateuch and is omitted in the case of the other books because the manuscripts were not sufficiently accurate, although large sums of money were expended in the process of obtaining them.

during the course of printing or rectifications of omissions — such as occur occasionally in the early Italian prints¹ — are hardly to be found.

The productions of this Portuguese press would mark the conclusion of the list of incunable editions of the Bible and its Books known to us, were it not for the fact that ignorance, sensationalism and greed have created incunables in our century which never left the press before the year 1500. All these migrated to the land of limitless possibilities which, according to a report from New York², even possesses Hebrew incunables printed in Constantinople, Fano and Pesaro. It can now be understood that while all European libraries, which are the repositories of the century-long efforts of zealous and scholarly collectors (Oppenheimer, de Rossi, Michael, Saraval, Almanzi, Ghirondi, Merzbacher, Porges) but reject trash of this nature, possess together hardly more than a hundred Hebrew incunables, the Census³ can name 123 Hebrew incunables in the possession of the few libraries of America where collecting did not start until about half a century ago. The last edition of the Census appeared in 1940, and at the same rate of progress it is not unlikely that by now the number has increased by some dozens. A far larger number are listed in the *Thesaurus Typographiae Hebraicae Saeculi XV*, amongst them also Bible editions or parts of the Bible which are not mentioned here by me. They consist, in the main, of fragments and odd leaves

¹A few examples. In the first edition of Maimonides' *משנה תורה* the end of Ch. 17 and almost half of Ch. 18 of *הילך ברכות ותבשיל* are missing; they are subsequently printed on separate sheets and pasted in. In Gersonides' commentary to the Pentateuch, Cunat, Mantua, the last line of fol. 80^d is missing and is written in by hand in the whole edition. In view of the purely Italian handwriting the allegation of the "Soncino explorers" that the Cunat script is cut after his own handwriting seems to be very improbable. In the first edition of *תשבות הושע*, Rome before 1480, a whole page (fol. 103r and 104r) is printed twice. In Albo, *ברית*, Soncino 1485, the misprint on the first page of the fifth quire, which was later corrected and re-set, was retained in some copies. In Kimchi, *משנה*, Naples 1497, a whole page is omitted in the radix ט and added at the end. In Nachmanides, Commentary to the Pentateuch, Naples 1490, a leaf omitted between quires 16 and 17 is printed subsequently but is missing in most copies. In Bachya's com-

mentary to the Pentateuch, Naples 1492, whole passages are missing in several places and space is left empty for their addition by hand. In Landau, *תלמוד*, Naples 1487, additional emendations and corrections of misprints are printed at the end which, however, are missing in most copies so that it is listed as complete with 184 leaves. The fifth section of the first edition of the Mishna, Naples 1492, is a supplementary print, as the manuscripts were missing. In Bab. Talm., *Yebamoth*, Pesaro 1509, my copy has two different prints of the second sheet of quire 26 (fol. 152 and 155); the reprint has column headings in rabbinic type and some changes in the composition. Variations in the composition in the Soncino editions of Maimonides' *משנה תורה* and Jacob ben Asher's *תורה נבואה* are frequent and well known.

² *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben*, X, p. 222.

³ Census of Fifteenth Century Books Owned in America, New York 1919.

which, in part, reveal themselves as late products to the expert eye or, at least, for whose claim to have been printed before 1500 not the least shred of evidence can be adduced. Scraps and fragments whose connection with products of earlier times cannot be proved are displayed as "incunables" and are paid for as incunables for the eventual enrichment of the sum total of Hebrew incunables and the glorification of the wisdom of the discoverer.

At the instigation of the Minister of Education in Paris, MOISE SCHWAB visited the Middle European libraries at the end of the last century to make an inventory of early Jewish prints. The investigation also included American libraries. His list¹ contains altogether 91 items of Hebrew incunables², and not ten have since then gone to swell the European libraries.

For the sake of illumination I want to mention a case that I experienced personally. At the beginning of the XVIth century a number of Talmud tractates with Yizchaki's commentary were printed in small-quarto in Salonica or Fez. As in the case of many other products of this press, the Spanish type and the get-up are bad. As, however, they follow oriental or Spanish manuscripts they are of considerable value from the point of view of textual criticism, but were superseded by the far more beautiful Italian editions provided with many commentaries and became almost extinct. A detailed description of the tractate Erubin of this edition which appeared on the 19th of November 1521 is given by RABBINOWICZ in his treatise on Talmud prints³. He also mentions a fragment from the tractate Yoma and presumes that perhaps the whole Talmud was printed there. The British Museum possesses a fragment from the tractate Kiddushin that was originally marked "Spain 1485?" but was later identified as belonging to this edition⁴. Also the Cambridge University Library possesses a number of fragments from further tractates (Berakoth, Beza, Chagiga), and others are known. About ten years ago a Jerusalem bookseller offered me three small tractates, one complete, with the remark "probably Guadalajara". I recognised them at once as the Salonica or Fez prints and refused to pay the incunable price which he

¹ SCHWAB, *Les Incunables orientaux*, p. 26 sqq.
² From these Nos. 81, 88 and 89 have still to be deducted.

³ תְּמִימָה בַּעֲדֵת וְחַלְמָה, מאמר על הראבון ר' יהוֹנָה, Munich 1877, p. 28.
⁴ Cf. *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, XIX, p. 110, no. 10.

demanded. Now these tractates grace the library of an incunable collector here who did not omit to extol the newly discovered "incunables" in a bibliographical journal on the grounds that in this edition the letters of the Tetragrammaton resemble those of the Guadalajara prints without remembering or pointing out that also all the other letters of the alphabet resemble the type of those prints. This collector has already sold his collection to America and no doubt the *Census* will soon enrich the sum total of Hebrew incunables in the U.S.A. to the extent of three.

This digression, which is only of interest to those who concern themselves with Hebrew bibliography, belongs more properly to a treatise on Hebrew incunables which was published in Oxford in 1948. It is only mentioned here to explain why I have not cited the leaves and fragments of the Bible and Biblical Books listed in the *Census* and partly noted in the *Thesaurus*. These American "incunables" are remnants of early prints. There is no proof, however, that they are products of the incunabula era. For the sake of completeness, however, be it added here that the *Census* lists in addition a number of single leaves and fragments of old Bible editions which are in the possession of the New York Jewish Theological Seminary. They are: *Hebraica* 499, 503, 504, 506 and 528. Those described as Spanish only distinguish themselves by their bad composition and their primitive type and could just as easily be products of the presses of Salónica or Fez; and those described as Italian could be of an even later date. To this class of incunables belongs also a ten-leaved fragment from the book of Job exhibited as a unique copy in the catalogue of a book-pedlar, which is probably identical with H 528 of the *Census*, and the fragment mentioned by HABERMANN¹ from a quarto Bible "Naples, before 1500?", probably coming under No. 498 of the *Census*, in the possession of a private library rich in "incunable fragments".

Early Bible editions have been in demand for centuries. Jewish scholars such as KARO and NORZI can name texts which are extremely rare but with the existence of which we are acquainted. With far greater zeal and with better means at their disposal Christian scholars such as DE ROSSI and KENNICOFT up to GINSBURG in our times followed the trail. In the introduction to

¹ המדרפסים בני שאנגן, p. 36.

his *Variae Lectiones*¹, vol. tert. p. CXLV, the first mentions a number of such fragments from undated editions used by him but always describes them as products of the XVIth century. Hardly a fragment escaped the keen-scented nose of the old master, Steinschneider, and only the purveyors of the American libraries succeeded in emptying over their clients the cornucopia of Hebrew incunables and incunable Bibles in the short space of half a century. The fact that these early prints are not incunables cannot, indeed, be established by proof unless by some accident a complete copy with the date of publication should come to light. As a striking example I only want to mention the following. The *Thesaurus* offers three facsimiles, A 89, 1, 2 and 3, of a fragment from a "Chumesh"², "Soncino, before 1500". This fragment, however, is not a pre-1500 print but consists of leaves from the Pesaro Bible 1511—1517 which is known to every bibliographer and is described more exhaustively by MANZONI³ and of which more will be said later. But the *Thesaurus* is three pages thicker; the library has become one incunable richer; yet the reader has been misled. By those interested in the subject under discussion here these fragments that I have mentioned may be regarded as that which they are in reality: namely remnants of early prints of Biblical books dating from the turn of the XVth century the exact date of whose appearance is unknown but is probably after 1500.

For an entire decade, from the middle of the last of the XVth to the middle of the first of the XVIth century, the Jewish press was completely at rest. Two very small books of a few pages which are known to bibliographers are of hardly any importance. The Iberian peninsula expelled the Jews and with them also the presses which they had founded in various places. Also in Italy, however, the head of the Soncino family of printers, who was master of the Hebrew press in his country, ceased his activity of printing Hebrew books. Gersom ben Mose now calls himself Girolamo or Hieronymus, according to whether he prints in Italian or Latin, and his typographical art now enters into the service of non-Jewish literature. Not until 1505 — living at the time

¹ *Variae Lectiones Veteris Testamenti*, Parmae 1784—88, 4 vols, 4°.

² Sic in the whole work, and consequently not a

mispint.

³ *Annali tipografici dei Soncino*, Tomo III, p. 274 sqq. and p. 425 sqq.

in Fano — does he once more reach out for his Hebrew type; not exclusively, however, but in conjunction with other foreign languages which in actual fact predominate. Only after his emigration to the Orient at the beginning of the third decade of the century does he once more begin to confine himself to Hebrew literature.

At the same time, round the middle of the first decade, the Hebrew press also begins to function in the Ottoman empire. Introduced by Portuguese refugees who at first used the type and ornamentations which they had brought with them from home, it developed later, too, in Fez and Salonica. Finally it also found its feet in other European states. Outstanding and extensive works left the press in Constantinople during the first decade; but only a single part of the Bible, a Pentateuch, folio with Targum and several commentaries, Constantinople 1505. A magnificent edition of a 32-lined folio Bible in two columns with beautiful large type, which can be placed side by side with the first edition of the Vulgata, was undertaken by the energetic Gersom Soncino in Pesaro. Only the first half, however, appeared in 1511; the second not until after a long interval in 1517. Not only did his press receive the coup de grâce from a more powerful competitor with far superior financial resources, namely Daniel Bomberg of Flanders — the Aldus of Hebrew book art — who opened a press in Venice on a large scale with a staff of scholars as scientific supervisors and correctors, but indeed the entire printing of the Bible passed from Jewish into Christian hands. In the Orient, in Constantinople and Salonica — later, too, in Prague — Jewish editions of individual parts of the Bible still appeared with Targum and commentaries in Jewish workshops; in the main because of the commentaries, but no longer complete editions. "Our inheritance has passed to the stranger"¹ as he who bewailed Israel's fate once lamented.

The first worthy edition of the Bible — intended, it is true, for non-Jews — accompanied by the New Testament, the Septuagint and the Vulgate, is the Complutensian Polyglot, undertaken at the instigation of Pope Leo X by cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros consisting of six folio volumes, Alcala 1514—1517. Also the three subsequent large Bible polyglots, those of Antwerp²,

¹ Th. 5, 2.

² Plantin, 1569—72, 8 vols.

Paris¹ and London², with text and Targum, edited by the leading experts of the time according to the best manuscripts collected by virtue of the munificence of Western ecclesiastical dignitaries³, serve rather ecclesiastical and scholarly purposes and are not intended for Jewish readers.

In 1516 Daniel Bomberg opened his famous press with a small-quarto edition of the Pentateuch together with the five Scrolls and the Haphtarot, these latter being printed differently for the different synagogal rites. This edition was later followed by many others. According to an otherwise uncorroborated report by Joseph Hacohen⁴, Bomberg's press is supposed to have been in operation already in 1513. This Pentateuch, however, was only an experiment, and already the following year sees the appearance of a four-volumed folio edition of the Bible with Targum, various commentaries and masoretic appendices — a forerunner of his standard edition of the *Biblia Magna Rabbinica* — as well as a separate edition of the text in quarto. Three folio editions with Targum, rabbinic commentaries and masoretic appendices and three quarto editions of the text appeared in this press during the three decades of its existence⁵ — later it degenerated under different ownership — in composition and print veritable masterpieces of the printing press, as all other of Bomberg's productions. The editor and corrector of the ancestor of these editions was Felix Pratensis, a convert to the Christian Faith, the teacher and expert supervisor of Bomberg.

While these editions, however, appeared in a Jewish publishing house — although the owner was a Christian — in a Jewish style and with Hebrew titles, all subsequent complete editions until the decline of the century were mostly published by Christians with Latin titles and headings and a revision of the text. Countless editions of varying sizes, from the largest folio to the smallest 16mo, appeared in the world-famous presses of Robert Stephanus

¹ VITRE, 1629, 10 vols.

² Ed. BR. WALTON, 1655—57, 6 and 2 vols.

³ In the case of the first edition alone, 4000 gold ducats were donated for the purchase of Hebrew manuscripts.

⁴ דברי הימים מלפני קרפת מלכויות בית אנטוינן הרותה, ed. pr. fol. 163b.

⁵ When the Bomberg quarto editions of the Hebrew Bible appeared they were widely distributed amongst Christian theologians and formed part of the basic foundation of the theological student. The university of Tübingen alone bought 100 copies for Reuchlin's lectures. Nevertheless, they are extremely rare today, and the copies that have been preserved all come from non-Jewish possession.

(Estienne) in Paris, Christopher Plantin in Antwerp, Pierre de la Rouviere in Geneva and Fr. Raphelengius in Leyden, without counting the edition of Froben and Münster's two editions in Bâle and other prints in Germany and Holland. But also among the editions of separate parts of the Bible Jewish achievement was insignificant and left much to be desired.

Two Jewish polyglots of the Pentateuch are still worthy of mention as rarities and curiosities. Both were printed by Elieser Soncino in Constantinople, the first in 1546 and the other in 1547. One has 420 leaves in folio and contains, apart from the text and Targum, the Arabic translation by Saadya Alfaymi and a Persian translation by Jacob Tavus. It is not old, however, as was formerly supposed, but is of a later date¹ and specially executed for this edition and consequently of no value for the purposes of textual criticism. The other has 389 leaves in the same format and get-up and contains, apart from text and Targum, a Spanish and a modern Greek translation. Both editions also contain Yizchaki's commentary and, since they were intended for Jewish use, the translations are printed in Hebrew type. With these two important works the Soncinos conclude their activities as printers and disseminators of Jewish literature, a task which they commenced in Italy and carried on when they migrated to the Orient.

From the many polyglots of the Psalms two deserve to be specially singled out, probably unknown to some readers of these pages. The one, in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek with three Latin translations and explanatory notes, edited by Augustin Giustinian appeared in the press of P. P. Porrus in Genoa in 1516 in large-quarto. It is interesting not only as a print because of the bizarre Hebrew type, completely different from the Spanish-Portuguese, German and Italian scripts known from prints or manuscripts, but also because its note on Psalm 19,4 contains the first printed report of Columbus's discovery of America. Columbus was born in that town and had died ten years before the printing was commenced. Of textual interest is the Targum which is provided with accents — as are the Spanish-Portuguese prints of the other parts — and as far as I know not to be found in any other edition.

¹ Cf. GEIGER's *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissen und Leben*, X, p. 103 sqq.

Far rarer, however, is the Psalm polyglot edited by Johannes Potken in Cologne in 1518 in small-folio. Apart from the Hebrew text, Targum, Septuaginta and Vulgata, it also contains the Ethiopian translation which on account of its great age — it dates from the Vth century — is of great importance for textual criticism. Ethiopian was so unknown at that time that on the title page and in other places it is for some strange reason called Chaldean. Of interest, too, is the *Introductiunculae in tres Linguis* added at the end — missing in some copies — which, in addition to philological matters, also contains the Christian Articles of Faith and similar passages in the Hebrew language. Potken was the first to make the Ethiopian language and script known in Europe and already five years previously he had published the Psalms in Ethiopian in Rome with the apocryphal Psalm 151 contained in Ethiopian manuscripts together with other canonical and apocryphal poetic passages from the Bible.

Furthermore a Pentateuch with Targum and Yizchaki's commentary, unknown to bibliography, deserves to be specially brought into prominence. It was printed in folio by Yehuda Gedalya in Salonica and finished on the 12th of October 1513 and was probably the first print of this press. This book was once in my possession. I was compelled, however, when threatened by total blindness a quarter of a century ago, to part with it in addition to some of my library. Two incomplete copies, deprived of the date and place of printing, are to be found in two public libraries in Europe and have probably escaped the forerunners of the atomic bomb. A fourth copy was seen by a globe-trotter almost a century ago in a remote spot in the Caucasus. The learned editor of his travel book¹ completely misunderstood the date² so that no-one knew to identify this edition with the incomplete copy described in detail by DE ROSSI³. Differing only in its format, this edition corresponds textually and typographically, in the minutest detail and the initials, with Toledano's Lisbon edition. The learned editor, however, a bibliographer greatly esteemed for his knowledge of incunabula, was not an incunabula fiend, and the sum total of Spanish-Portuguese Hebrew incunables in the European libraries remained unaugmented.

¹ *תולדות המוסלמים* by J. J. CERNYI, edited by HARKAVY, Petersburg 1884. ² Cf. op. cit. p. 198. ³ Op. cit. p. 150.

The XVIth century closes with a peculiar polyglot in six languages — Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, German and Slavonic — in which only the radical letters of the Hebrew text are black, while of the other Hebrew letters only the outlines are printed. It was edited by E. Hutter in Nuremberg in 1599 in folio after the Hebrew text had already appeared previously in a separate edition. However, only the Octateuch of this edition appeared, and the place of the other parts is taken by the New Testament in twelve languages.

All the editions described here are very rare. The copies still preserved — originating mostly from non-Jewish sources or private collections — are to be found almost exclusively in the large public libraries. Of the three incunable editions of the complete Bible, the second (Naples c. 1491) is the most beautiful and the rarest. Of the nine copies known, which are partly incomplete, six — including mine printed on parchment — are in England. In order, however, not to detract from the total of Hebrew incunables in the United States it may be mentioned that the *Census*, too, can name a 90-leaved fragment in the possession of a New York library. The great untiring collectors Oppenheimer and Michael, who were equipped both with the knowledge as well as the means, did not succeed in acquiring a copy; and of the two romantics of Hebrew bibliography, Saraval and Almanzi, it was only the latter who was able to add a copy, albeit very defective, to his collection of beloved treasures¹.

POSTSCRIPT

After the complete manuscript had been delivered to the publisher, I discovered, in the supplement to vol. IV no. 4199/10 of the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, a description of a completely unknown 31-line incunable edition of the Hebrew Bible, which is identical with No. H 498 of the *Census* and is mentioned by HABERMANN p. 36 (ante p. 27) and which is alleged to have appeared in Soncino in 1495. This edition is certainly worthy of mention as an old unknown Bible, especially by reason of the unusual inclusion of the index to the Haphtaras between the books Nehemia and Chronicles. I have

¹ Cf. *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de feu Joseph Almanzi*, Padua 1864, No. 210 of the non-Jewish section.

already proved, however, in my treatise on Hebrew Incunables (pp. 68 et seqq.) that it could not have been an incunable edition, but only appeared between 1507 and 1511 in the press of Gerson Soncino in Fano or Pesaro. In the same work I have also drawn attention to the unreliability of the collections in which the fragments of this edition are to be found.

GLOSSARY

BIBLIA REGIA. The royal Bible. Title of the polyglot Bible promoted by king Philipp II of Spain and printed by Plantin in Antwerp, 1569—72. Well-known because of its correctness, and consequently preferred by Bible scholars from a textual point of view.

CENSORSHIP. The ecclesiastical and state censorship to which all Hebrew books, manuscripts and prints were subjected. In the case of prints a pre-censorship was later introduced without which the printing was not allowed to take place.

COLOPHON. Point, end, conclusion. The information given at the end of old prints or manuscripts by the author, scribe or printer about the place and year of writing or printing respectively of the book.

DONATUM. Textbooks of the Latin language introduced in the schools in the middle of the IVth century modelled on the grammar of Aelius Donatus.

EXEGESIS. Interpretation of, and commentary to, the Bible.

FIVE SCROLLS. The Biblical books of Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther which are read on various holidays and, for this purpose, are also written on scrolls. In the Hebrew Bible they are placed together and belong to the Hagiographa and are usually also added to the Pentateuch editions.

HAGIOGRAPHA. According to the Jewish division of the Bible text, the poetic, didactic and the last historical books of the Bible.

HAPHTARA. Conclusion. A chapter from the prophetic books which has some bearing on the weekly portion of the Pentateuch and is read after it on the Sabbath, or which has some reference to a holiday on which it is read in addition to the portion from the Pentateuch.

INDEX. Complete title is Index Librorum Prohibitorum. An index of writings banned by the Church.

LETTERS OF INDULGENCE. These were drawn up for sinners by the Catholic Church against payment of money for religious and ecclesiastical purposes.

MACAMAE. Arabic: sitting. Originally meetings of poets who improvised poems and gave extempore representations; later name for similar written poems in rhymed prose.

MASORA. Tradition. A compilation of all readings and all variations from the customary writing in the text of the Hebrew Bible.

MISSALE SPECIALE. Title of the oldest printed missal, which was discovered about half a century ago.

OCTATEUCH. The five books of Moses together with the books Joshua, Judges and Ruth which, in some old Bible translations, form a separate section.

PENTATEUCH. The five-book. The five books of Moses.

PERICOME. The weekly portion from the Pentateuch that is recited during the service on the Sabbath.

POLYGLOT. A book, especially a Bible edition, in several languages.

PSALTER. The Biblical book of the Psalms of David.

RABBINICAL BOOKS. Works in the late Hebrew language dealing exclusively with Jewish Law and Jewish life and consisting mainly of expositions of the Bible and the Talmud, ritual codices, legal opinions and homilies.

RADICAL LETTERS. The verbs in the Semitic languages consist of three consonants which are called the root, and almost without exception the nouns are formed from these, often by means of prefixing or suffixing individual letters. Also the pronouns and other particles are added as prefixes or suffixes.

SCROLL OF ANTIOCHEUS. A shorter earlier history of the Maccabean rising and the Maccabean wars.

SCROLL OF THE LAW. The Pentateuch written on parchment in the form of a scroll for public recitation in the synagogue.

SELICHA. Prayer of repentance. Collection of such prayers for the days of repentance and fast days.

SEPTUAGINTA. (Abbreviated LXX). Greek translation of the Bible.

TALMUD. The teaching. The teachings of the Jews concluded and put into writing during the Vth and VIth centuries which, apart from other sections from all branches of daily life, constitute in the main an exposition and amplification of the Mosaic Law.

TARGUM. The Aramaic translation of the books of the Bible. Best known are that of Onkelos for the Pentateuch and that of Jonathan ben Uziel for the other books.

TURIM. The rows. Universal title for the four ritual codices of Jacob ben Asher.

VOWELS AND ACCENTS. The alphabet of the Semitic languages consists only of consonants. The vowel signs are placed below or above the appropriate consonant. The Biblical books also have accents for the intonation, corresponding, to some extent, to our music notes.

VULGATA. The Latin translation of the Bible by Hieronymus recognised by the Church as opposed to the older translation known by the name of Itala.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

- 1477 Pentateuch with Targum, s.l.
 1477 Psalms with Kimchi, Bologna.
 1477 Psalms, Bologna.
 1482 Pentateuch with Targum and Rashi, Bologna.
 1485 Early Prophets with Kimchi, Soncino.
 1486 Later Prophets with Ralbag, Naples.
 1486 Proverbs with Immanuel Naples.
 1486 Job, Daniel, Ezra; Nehemia, Five Scrolls and Chronicles, Naples.
 1487 Pentateuch, Faro.
 1487 Later Prophets, s.l.
 1487 Psalms with Kimchi, Naples.
 Between 1487 and 1490 Pentateuch with Five Scrolls, Ixar.
 1488 Bible, Soncino.
 1488 Pentateuch (part of Bible of same year).
 1490 Pentateuch with Targum and Rashi, Ixar.
 1490 Psalms, Proverbs and Job, Soncino.
 1491 Pentateuch, Haphtaras and Five Scrolls, Brescia.
 1491 Pentateuch, Five Scrolls and Scroll of Antiochus, Naples.
 1491 Pentateuch with Targum and Rashi, Lisbon.
 1491 or 1492 Bible, Naples.
 1491 or 1492 Pentateuch (off-print from the Bible, Naples).
 1492 Isaiah and Jeremiah with Kimchi, Lisbon.
 1492 Proverbs with Ralbag and Meiri, Leiria.
 1493 Pentateuch with Haphtaras and Five Scrolls, Brescia.
 1493 (?) Proverbs with ibn Yachya, Lisbon.
 1493 Psalms (off-print from the Brescia-Bible).
 1494 Bible, Brescia.
 1494 Early Prophets with Targum, Kimchi and Ralbag, Leiria.
 1495 (correctly 1511) Bible, Pesaro.
 Before 1500 Pentateuch, Haphtaras and Five Scrolls, s.l.
 1505 Pentateuch with Targum and several commentaries, Constantinople.
 1511—17 Bible, Constantinople.
 1513 Pentateuch, Salonica.
 1513 Psalms, Ethiopic, Rome.
 1516 Bible Polyglot, Alcala.
 1516 Pentateuch, Venice.
 1516 Psalms Polyglot, Genoa.
 1517 et seq. Biblia Magna Rabbinica, Venice.
 1518 Psalms Polyglot, Cologne.
 1546 Pentateuch Polyglot (Jewish edition), Constantinople.
 1547 Pentateuch Polyglot (Jewish edition), Constantinople.
 1569—72 Bible Polyglot, Antwerp.
 1599 Octateuch Polyglot, Nuremberg.

INDEX OF BIBLICAL BOOKS

- BIBLE, complete, Soncino, 1488, p. 17.
 BIBLE, complete, Naples, 1491 or 1492, p. 21.
 BIBLE, complete, Brescia, 1494, p. 22.
 BIBLE, complete, Soncino, 1495, but really Pesaro, 1511, p. 33.
 BIBLIA MAGNA RABBINICA, Bomberg, Venice, approx. 1517 and later editions p. 30.
 BIBLE, complete, Constantinople, 1511—17, p. 29.
 PENTATEUCH with Targum, s.l., 1477, p. 13.
 PENTATEUCH with Targum and Rashi, Bologna, 1482, p. 12.
 PENTATEUCH, Faro, 1487, p. 16.
 PENTATEUCH with Haphtaras and the Five Scrolls, Ixar, 1487—90, p. 17.
 (PENTATEUCH and Five Scrolls, Soncino, 1488, p. 18.)
 PENTATEUCH with Targum and Rashi, Ixar, 1490, p. 18.
 PENTATEUCH with Targum and Rashi, Lisbon, 1491, p. 19.
 PENTATEUCH with Rashi, the Five Scrolls and the Scroll of Antiochus, Naples, 1491, p. 20.
 PENTATEUCH with Haphtaras and the Five Scrolls, Brescia, 1491, p. 22.
 PENTATEUCH with Haphtaras and the Five Scrolls, Brescia, 1493, p. 22.
 PENTATEUCH with Targum and other Commentaries, Constantinople, 1505, p. 29.
 PENTATEUCH with Haphtaras (off-print from the Bible 1491—92), p. 21.
 PENTATEUCH with Haphtaras and the Five Scrolls, s.l.e.d., p. 23.
 PENTATEUCH, Salonica, 1513, p. 32.
 PENTATEUCH, Bomberg, Venice, 1516, p. 30.
 EARLY PROPHETS with Kimchi, Soncino, 1485, p. 14.
 EARLY PROPHETS with Targum, Kimchi and Ralbag, Leiria, 1494, p. 24.
 LATER PROPHETS with Kimchi, Soncino, (1486), p. 15.
 LATER PROPHETS, s.l., 1487, p. 17.
 ISAIAH and JEREMIAH with Kimchi, Lisbon, 1492, p. 21.
 HAGIOGRAPHA with various commentaries, Naples, 1484—87, p. 15.
 PSALMS, PROVERBS and JOB, Soncino, 1490, p. 19.
 PSALMS with Kimchi, Bologna, 1477, p. 11.
 PSALMS, (Bologna, 1477), p. 12.
 PSALMS, Brescia, 1493 (off-print from Bible, Brescia), p. 23.
 PSALMS, see Hagiographa.
 PROVERBS, see Hagiographa.
 JOB, EZRA, NEHEMIAH, the FIVE SCROLLS and CHRONICLES, see Hagiographa.
 BIBLE POLYGLOTS, Alcala, Antwerp, Paris, London, p. 29.
 OCTATEUCH POLYGLOT, Hutter, Nuremberg, 1599, p. 33.
 PSALM POLYGLOT, Genoa, 1516, p. 31.
 PSALM POLYGLOT, Cologne, 1518, p. 32.
 PSALMS, ETHIOPIC, Rome, 1530, p. 32.
 PROVERBS with Targum, Ralbag and Meiri, Leiria, 1492, p. 24.
 PROVERBS with ibn Yachya, Lisbon, (1493), p. 21.
 PENTATEUCH POLYGLOT (Jewish edition), Constantinople, 1546, p. 31.
 PENTATEUCH POLYGLOT (Jewish edition), Constantinople, 1547, p. 31.



ARLY printed editions of the Hebrew Bible are of importance from a typographical point of view. By studying these texts we can follow with interest the small improvements made by the printers in the course of time. The difficulties which had to be overcome in printing such complicated texts were certainly very great, and we can understand that early printers tried to simplify the texts they had to print; and that they even altered the texts before them in minor details. Later they succeeded in reproducing the manuscripts which happened to be at their disposal with greater exactness. In his larger edition of the Hebrew Bible prepared for the British and Foreign Bible Society, CHRISTIAN D. GINSBURG registered, besides the small variations of 73 manuscripts, those of 19 early prints also. So we can see with what kind of manuscripts the early prints were connected. Manuscripts of that kind are preserved to us in very great number. For a *critical edition* of the Hebrew Bible the various readings of early prints are without value. We can collate the manuscripts themselves and need not reconstruct their readings from more or less imperfect reproductions.

In these early printed Bibles no reference is made to the manuscript which was before the printers. The first to do so was FELIX PRATENSIS (Fra Felice da Prato), a very learned Jew who had become a Christian and had entered the order of the Augustine Hermits. Nothing is known of the Jewish period of his life, neither do we know his Jewish name nor anything of his Jewish education. In Venice he had come in contact with Daniel Bomberg, son of Cornelius Bomberg (van Bomberghen) of Antwerp, a wealthy merchant who had settled in Venice. Felix described him as a lover of literature and a devoted student of liberal arts, and he tells us that under his guidance Bomberg had studied some Hebrew and had acquired a certain amount of knowledge of it. To him Felix had suggested the idea of founding a Hebrew printing press. Bomberg agreed and asked the authorities in Venice for the privilege of opening such

a press. This was granted to him in 1515, and already within two years Felix edited in Bomberg's press his great Bible. The Hebrew text is accompanied by all sorts of Targums and Rabbinic commentaries and is followed by other valuable material. It consists of 667 folios of large size, and is known as the "First Rabbinic Bible", Venice 1517.

Felix' intention in editing this great Bible is expressed in a Latin Dedication to Pope Leo X, printed on the verso side of the title page for the whole Bible — missing in copies for the special use of the Jews, where the title page is replaced by one for the Pentateuch only without the Dedication. Here Felix refers to the fact that in spite of the existing difficulties Latin and Greek studies were flourishing in his time.

Quis enim (ut reliqua omittam) ignorat latinam linguam ab inclinatione Romani Imperii maiora nunquam accepisse incrementa, quam quae nostris hisce temporibus assequita est. Quis non videt graecas litteras, quae tot retro saeculis nullis vel certe paucis cognitiae extiterunt, nunc adeo vigere ut cum romana eloquentia pristinum nitorem ac ornamentum suum paulatim accipient.
On the other hand, the study of Hebrew and Chaldaean had completely disappeared among the Christians. The present edition of the Bible, however, is proof that it could be recalled into life.

At vero ut illa ipsa minus extollam minusque admirer, praesens liber quem graeco nomine Biblia appellant facile probat. Is enim huiusmodi est, ut vel unus hebraicam linguam et caldaeam quae tot annos demortuae iacuerant ad lucem revocare non immerito existimari possit. Multi quidem antea manus numerus dictiones ipsas consequeretur, nihilque magis ab his desideraretur, quam verus et nativus candor, quem nunc a nobis illis esse restitutum qui legerint cognoscent omnes. Daniel enim Bombergus Antwerpensis . . . neque labori neque sumptibus parcens publicae utilitatis gratia plurimi collatis exemplaribus hosce libros, studio nostro fide et diligentia castigatos, imprimendos curavit. Rem equidem perdifficilem nec ob id ab aliis hactenus tentatam.
These words are of great interest from two points of view:

i) Felix claims to have used a very great number of manuscripts for his edition. The question arises, where did they come from? Libraries in

which valuable manuscripts could be found, carefully described in catalogues, and kept for the use of scholars, did not exist in that time. It is very likely that Daniel Bomberg, who, as we hear, spared neither labour nor cost, had bought most of them in order that they might be used for the great edition of the Bible. No description of the manuscripts existed, neither had they been carefully selected. Felix had to examine them, and he found that the splendour of many of them was diminished because there were almost as many errors in them as words.

This statement of Felix has been criticised strongly by GINSBURG who declared (Introduction, p. 946):

In my collations of the MSS. in the public Libraries of Europe I have not found a single Codex of any importance which contained as many errors as words.

Now, among the 73 manuscripts which Ginsburg collated for his greater edition of the Hebrew Bible, one of the oldest is the famous Codex Reuchlinianus of the Prophets, dated A.D. 1105. Ginsburg would certainly not have denied that this codex was one "of importance" in his opinion — it has been counted as No. 3 among 73. In collating this codex Ginsburg disregarded the different method of vocalisation which is to be explained by the fact that it came from a school of Masoretes different from that to which we are accustomed. If he had registered all the little differences, his apparatus would have grown to nearly twice the size, for when we compare carefully this codex with the usual text in the printed editions we find that hardly a single word is vocalised in exactly the same way in both. By studying the manuscripts Felix had come to the conclusion that only a vocalisation which was in general agreement with that with which we are accustomed could be regarded as the "correct" one. So it was quite logical when he declared that manuscripts vocalised in the manner of the Codex Reuchlinianus, and which, as mentioned, followed another method of vocalisation, contained almost as many errors as words. Manuscripts of that kind were not so rare. I have described quite a number of them in *Masoreten des Westens*, vol. II, p. 45*—68*. From Felix' statement it is clear that some of the manuscripts at his disposal must have been of that kind. Ginsburg did not realise these facts.

2) At the end of the note quoted above Felix says:

Bomberg . . . cared for publishing these books for general advantage, after very many manuscripts had been collated, and had been faithfully and carefully corrected by our endeavour, a very difficult task, as is shown by the fact that no one attempted it before.

To these words of Felix, Ginsburg writes: (Introduction, p. 945):

The language however which he uses in his Dedication to Leo X is not only unjustifiable, but positively misleading, and it is due to a proper understanding of the History of the Printed Text of the Hebrew Scriptures that the true nature of the case should be pointed out.

He then gives his own translation of a part of the Latin text, in which, however, the words "plurimis collatis exemplaribus" are completely omitted, so that his translation is really misleading. He continues (p. 946):

The astonishing part of this Dedication is the declaration that up to the publication of this Bible only MS. Bibles were in circulation which contained as many errors as words and that this was the first printed edition.

I have already spoken of the manuscripts. The early printed editions were not mentioned by Felix. They were of no value for a critical edition, as he had the manuscripts on which these editions had been based. If Ginsburg had correctly translated the Latin text and had carefully studied the whole context, he would have seen that "the very difficult task" in which Felix had no predecessor was not the printing of a Hebrew Bible. He declares that he was the first who made a *real edition* of the Hebrew Bible, after collating a great number of manuscripts, which had been critically examined by him. He was really the first to attempt such a task.

"The importance of this edition can hardly be overrated", writes Ginsburg, Introduction, p. 936, with full justification. We can take it for granted — although it is not anywhere expressly stated — that Felix took several years to prepare his edition. It is the first printed Bible in which the Kres are given in the margins, we find in it the נִגְמָנָה and the נִגְמָנָה, the Puncta Extraordinaria, the suspended, majuscular, inverted letters. Collating various manuscripts results in numerous various readings, affecting the vowel points, the accents and the consonants. The variants for the book of Joshua

are printed by Ginsburg on p. 937—9 of his Introduction, where they can be easily studied. In the Appendices he printed for the first time the so-called Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to the Pentateuch, the Second Targum to the book of Esther, the 13 Articles of faith formulated by Maimonides, and Ahron Ben Asher's Dikduke ha-Teamim.

Felix' edition was the basis for the "Second Rabbinic Bible", published by Daniel Bomberg in Venice 1524/5. This Bible was edited by Yakob ben Chayyim who tried to bring the text of the Bible into accordance with the Masora.

Yakob b. Chayyim b. Adoniya was a learned Jewish refugee from Tunis. About 1520 he came to Venice, was introduced by Chayyim b. Moshe b. Alton to Daniel Bomberg and engaged by him as a corrector in his printing office. He helped in editing a great number of works during the following years. We hear that he printed the first edition of the Tosephta, as an appendix to the great Talmudic Compendium of Rabbi Yishak al-Fasi (1521), helped in editing the Palestinian Talmud (1522/3), edited Seder Tohorot of the Mishna (1523), the Commentary on the Tora composed by Menachem from Recanati (1523), the Book of the 613 Prescriptions and Prohibitions (1523), and, together with David Pizzegetone b. Eliezer, Maimonides' Mishne Torah (1524), and several other works. At the same time he prepared the edition of the "Second Rabbinic Bible"¹.

The study of the Masora had come almost completely to a standstill. It was Yakob's merit that he resuscitated the serious study of the Masora. Firstly he had to look for manuscripts. He tells us expressly that the manuscripts on which he had to work were acquired by Daniel Bomberg for him. He writes in the Introduction to the Rabbinic Bible (ed. Ginsburg, London 1865, p. 34, cf. GINSBURG, *Introduction*, p. 956 f.):

When I explained to Bomberg the advantage of the Massorah, he did all in his power to send into all the countries in order to search out what may be found of the Massorah, and praised be the Lord we obtained as many of the Massoretic books as could possibly be got. He was not backward, and his hand

¹ See A. Berliner, Beiträge zur hebräischen Typographie Daniel Bombergs. Jahrbuch der Jüd.-litera-

tischen Gesellschaft, Vol. 3, Frankfurt 1905, p. 293—305.

was not closed, nor did he draw back his right hand from producing gold out of his purse to defray the expenses of the books and of the messengers who were engaged to make search for them in the most remote corners and in every place where they might possibly be found.

But the manuscripts collected in this way were somewhat disappointing. Yakob himself complains of their incorrectnesses, and to the Masoretic notes in these manuscripts he applies the Biblical text: "There was not a house in which there was not one dead" (Exod. 12, 30), so many mistakes had he found there. The Masoretic notes in the manuscripts at his disposal were written in flowers and ligatures, and had become of a decorative character. He had to correct them as best he could. By studying the Masora compiled by him we see that he had quite disparate Masoretic material before him, Palestinian material in the main, but belonging to different schools and times. We see however that he had also pieces of Babylonian Masora before him, and that he often had to help himself by making his own Masora. He was convinced that there was only one correct Masora, that this Masora was in agreement with the Masora compiled by himself, and that the text arranged by him according to this Masora was the very text which had been established by the great Masoretic authorities of Tiberias, especially by Ahron b. Asher who flourished in the first half of the tenth century. Yakob ben Chayyim had never seen any old manuscript of the Bible, so that he could not be aware of the distinct differences between his text and that of Ben Asher.

It is very curious that the text edited by Jakob b. Chayyim has generally been regarded as the definitive one. Modern editors of the Hebrew text of the Bible cannot say more in praise of their own edition than that they are exact reprints of the text edited by Ben Chayyim. When Christian D. Ginsburg published his great edition of the Hebrew Bible for which he had collated, as we have seen, 73 manuscripts and 19 early prints of the Bible, he declared with emphasis that the text published by him is an exact reprint of Ben Chayyim's text — no changes have been made in it beyond the correction of obvious errors as indicated by the manuscripts collated, so we read in the Advertisement prefixed to the single parts of the edition. In his *Introduction to the Massoretico-critical edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London 1897), written

for an earlier edition of the same text, Ginsburg declares with regard to Ben Chayyim's text (p. 963 f) that:

it is the only Massoretic recension. No textual redactor of modern days who professes to edit the Hebrew text according to the Massorah can deviate from it without giving conclusive justification for so doing.

Such a standpoint, however, is remarkable, and would hardly hold in any other sphere. E.g. nobody would be inclined to regard a classical text published in the beginning of the 16th century as the best text available. Again, the Greek New Testament edited at that time by Erasmus has to-day only a historical interest. How then can we think that such a complicated text as that of the Hebrew Bible could be satisfactorily produced on the basis of late and inaccurate manuscripts, more than 400 years ago? How can we think it possible that such an edition was made at that time after a preparation of not much more than two years, by a man who was overwhelmed with other work? How could we think it possible that such an edition which occupies, together with all sorts of Targums, commentaries etc., not less than 951 folios, about 1900 folio pages, could be printed in about 15 months?¹ Yet this has been regarded as the only authoritative Masoretic text up to the present day.

The text of the Hebrew Bible generally regarded as authoritative was the text prepared shortly before and after A. D. 900 by members of the Ben Asher family in Tiberias. MAIMONIDES (died A. A. 1204), when speaking of the great confusion found in manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible at his time, praises highly a manuscript of the whole Bible, because Ben Asher had corrected it several times and had fixed every detail in it, so that it could be regarded as reliable in all problems connected with the text of the Bible. Yakob b. Chayyim was firmly convinced that it was the Ben Asher text which he published with the help of the Masora, and this was generally believed. Because of this fact we can understand the great success which was gained by the text published by him. This was the reason that it was reprinted

¹ Freimann, in "Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie", vol. X, 1906, p. 35, says that the whole Bible was printed in less than eight months. But this is not correct, as L. Goldschmidt informs me. The printing of vol. 2 began, as indicated on the title, on 21st November 1524, printing of vol. 4 was

finished on 11th October 1525. We may suppose that for printing the first volume they needed about four months, and for printing the 66 folios of Masora at the end of vol. 4 about three weeks, so that the whole work of the bible was finished in about fifteen months.

in nearly all editions of the Hebrew Bible, and was made the basis of our Hebrew grammar. Christian D. Ginsburg, greatly interested in the text of the Hebrew Bible, simply reprinted the Ben Chayyim text in the two editions published by him, for the Trinitarian Bible Society in 1894 and for the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1908—1926. He had no doubt that the text published by him was the authoritative Ben Asher text. So he did nothing more than to add to the Ben Chayyim text a smaller or greater amount of unimportant various readings of a great mass of manuscripts and printed editions which he had at his disposal in London.

That the Ben Chayyim text was not really identical with the Ben Asher text may be illustrated by the following incident: Sometime ago I was asked by the late Professor David Herzog in the Bodleian Library, whether I could explain the fact, that the quotations from the Bible in an ancient manuscript of a grammatical treatise of Ibn Ezra were never in agreement with the text in our printed Bibles. I said to him: you cannot expect Ibn Ezra to quote a text of the Bible fixed several centuries after him. Compare the Ben Asher text! I showed him the text I had published according to a Ben Asher manuscript in the third edition of R. Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*, Stuttgart 1937. He did so and found Ibn Ezra's quotations in exact agreement with that text.

The Ben Asher text had a very wide circulation during the 10th and the following centuries. In the Russian Public Library in Leningrad I found fourteen manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible which can be dated between 929 and 1121. They all show the Ben Asher text. I may refer to my descriptions and the facsimiles of specimens I have published in "Masoreten des Westens" I, Stuttgart 1927. Jewish authors of the 10th and the following centuries interested in a vocalised text of the Hebrew Bible unanimously quote, like Ibn Ezra, the Ben Asher text. It is, however, not so easy to recognise this fact, as, in the printed editions, not only quotations of the Bible, but the whole method of vocalisation has been brought into accordance with the Ben Chayyim text. No editor dares to publish a Hebrew text with the vocalisation found in an ancient manuscript. He thinks it his duty to bring it into accordance with the text in our printed Bibles, i.e. the Ben Chayyim text. This very naive method of textual criticism is generally followed by grammarians

and editors up to the present day. The Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew published by M. H. SEGAL (Oxford 1927) disregards completely the valuable vocalisation added by Babylonian Masoretes to the text of the Mishna which indicates exactly how these texts were read in Babylonia, from where they were introduced into Palestine; Segal adds to the words quoted in his grammar a vocalisation adapted to the Ben Chayyim text of the Hebrew Bible. Again, the Siddur of Saadya, published in Jerusalem 1941 by I. DAVIDSON, S. ASAF and B. I. JOEL, was provided with a vocalisation in accordance with the Ben Chayyim text of our printed editions of the Bible. The valuable vocalisation of the Oxford manuscript which was the principal source for the edition is completely ignored. These modern editors seem to have forgotten that Saadya was a contemporary of the Ben Ashers, and not of Ben Chayyim.

The Ben Asher text is preserved in manuscripts written with the greatest care by prominent members of the Ben Asher family and provided by them with punctuation and Masora. One of these manuscripts, containing the Former and Later Prophets, was written in Tiberias by Moshe b. Asher for a certain Ya'bes b. Shelomo, who had prepared the parchment for the codex "by the work of his hands and the sweat of his face, for the honour of the God of Israel". In the colophon of the codex written by Moshe himself in the year 827 after the destruction of the "Second House", i.e. the Temple (A. D. 895, it is the oldest dated manuscript of the Bible so far known), the famous Masorete declares that the codex had been written

as it was understood by the congregation of the Prophets, the chosen of the Lord, the Saints of our God, who understood all the hidden things and embellished the secrets of wisdom, the chiefs of righteousness, the men of faith. They have not concealed anything of what had been given to them, nor added a word to what was transmitted to them. They have made powerful and mighty the Scriptures, the Twenty-Four Books, and have established them in their integrity with explanatory accents, with a commentary of pronunciation with sweet palate and beauty of speech.

These words by one of the prominent Masoretes of Tiberias are of great interest. They show that these men were very confident of the text created by them. They liked to be regarded as the chiefs of righteousness, the men of

faith, who have transmitted the text just as it had been transmitted to them, without any omission or addition. They have established the text in its integrity. It is a text as authoritative as it could possibly be.

The codex had been given by the first owner to the community of the Karaites in Jerusalem. It was then seized by the Crusaders, when they took Jerusalem in A.D. 1099. A few years later it was released and given by a certain David b. Yephet Neker al-Iskandari to the community of the Karaites in Cairo. In their synagogue the codex has now been preserved for more than 800 years. A photograph of the codex taken in 1927 in Cairo is at my disposal.

Another Ben Asher Codex is the famous manuscript of the whole Bible now preserved in the Synagogue of the Sephardic Jews in Aleppo. This is the codex which had been seen by Maimonides in the "Jerusalem Synagogue" in Old Cairo (see above). We do not know exactly at what time and under which conditions the codex was brought over from Egypt to Aleppo. It is, however, certain that it was in Aleppo in the middle of the 15th century. Sa'adya b. David al-'Adeni mentions it in his commentary on Maimonides' "Yad ha-Hazaka". The commentary was composed between 1478 and 1484. A fragment of it is preserved in the Bodleian MS. Hunt. 372. Here we read on fol. 138v — it was Dr. N. WIEDER who drew my attention to this passage:

The book to which the Gaon refers is still to day in the town Soba, i.e. Haleb (Aleppo), and they call it "the Crown" (at-taj), and it is written on parchment, three columns to a page, and at its end there is written: "I am Ahron b. Asher, who has corrected it". And I have seen it and read in it.

Jewish authors who saw and described the codex during the 19th century do not mention a colophon written by Ben Asher himself. But they have published, with more or less exactness, an important notice found at the end of the Codex from which we learn that the consonantal text was written by Shelomo b. Buya'a who also wrote in A.D. 929 the consonantal text of a Tora now in Leningrad (MS. Firk. II, 17). Punctuation and Masora were very carefully added to the Aleppo Codex by Ahron b. Moshe b. Asher. A wealthy Karaite from Basra, Israel b. Simha b. Sa'adya b. Ephraim, had endowed the Codex to the community of the Karaites in Jerusalem where it

was to be kept under the special care of two Karaite princes, Yoshiya and Yechezkiya (about A.D. 1050). As they were living at that time in Cairo, they had to appoint two trustworthy men in Jerusalem to take care of the Codex. It was to be brought out at the three great Jewish feasts, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles in order that the lessons should be publicly read from it. Besides, every serious scholar should be given an opportunity of using it for comparing and correcting manuscripts, but not for the purpose of studying it. — A further notice, on the first page of the Codex, says:

It was transferred in accordance with the right granted under release from the booty of Jerusalem, the holy city, to the community of Old Cairo, in the Jerusalem Synagogue.

We see, the Codex suffered the same fate as the above mentioned Prophet Codex at the hands of the Crusaders in A.D. 1099. But it, too, was released in c. A.D. 1105 and brought to Cairo. It was there that it was seen and so highly appreciated by Maimonides (see above).

Another Codex was copied "from the corrected clear books prepared by the master Ahron b. Moshe b. Asher" by a certain Shemuel b. Yakob in Old Cairo in A.D. 1008 or 1009. It is the oldest dated manuscript containing the whole Bible and is now MS. B. 19a of the Russian Public Library in Leningrad. GINSBURG has no doubt that this codex was copied from the Ben Asher Codex now in Aleppo. He writes in his "Introduction" p. 243:

In the year 1009, that is three or four years after it (the Aleppo codex) was conveyed to the Jerusalem Congregation at Cairo and most probably in the lifetime of the first Trustees, a certain Samuel b. Jacob copied this Standard Codex of Ben Asher for Meborak ibn Osdad. This very important copy is now in the Imperial Public Library at St. Petersburg. The name of the scribe, the place where the copy was made, the honoured person for whom it was transcribed and the date on which it was finished are all most minutely given in the Epigraph of the manuscript. They are written in the same handwriting as the manuscript itself.

From what I have said before it is clear that Ginsburg's reconstruction is wrong. The Leningrad Codex was copied from another Ben Asher manuscript which must have been in Egypt about A.D. 1000, and which, like so

many other manuscripts, later disappeared. If we compare the Leningrad Codex with the facsimile of one page of the Aleppo Codex published by WICKES (see below), we see that the latter has many more Masoretic notes in the margin than the former. Ben Asher certainly prepared several manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible and one of these had been copied by Shemuel b. Yakob.

It is well known that the authenticity of these Ben Asher Codices has been disputed. WILLIAM WICKES, for instance, who published a facsimile of a page of the Aleppo Codex in his "*Treatise of the Twenty-One so-called Prose Books of the Old Testament*" (Oxford, 1887) and investigated some readings of the Codex otherwise known to him, writes (p. IX):

From these few test-passages we may conclude that the statement assigning this Codex to Ben Asher is a FABRICATION merely introduced to enhance the value of the same, — and that the whole long epigraph, with the list of Qaraite names (showing it to be of Qaraite origin), etc., is untrustworthy and undeserving of serious notion.

In his article "*An account of the Earliest MSS. of the Old Testament*", (*Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica*, Vol. III, Oxford, 1891, pp. 25—27), ADOLF NEUBAUER published facsimiles of two pages of the Cairo Codex written by Moshe b. Asher. It was clear to him that the Codex was in general agreement with the Aleppo Codex, of which Wickes had declared that it had nothing to do with Ben Asher. So he writes:

But from the mode of accentuation in this MS., Drs. S. Baer and Wickes both concluded that it could not have been pointed by a Masorete of the Ben-Asher school, the accentuation being against the rules laid down by Ben Asher. NEUBAUER had no judgment of his own in this matter and did not dare to say anything against the authority of men like Wickes and Baer. Wickes depended in his condemnation of the Aleppo Codex on Baer's authority. He was so strongly influenced by Baer that he took over even the typical Jewish animosity against the Karaites! It is therefore Baer with whom I have to deal here.

BAER depended in his Masoretic studies upon Wolf Heidenheim. They were both convinced that all Masora had been written in order to confirm a Hebrew text of the Bible similar to that published by Yakob b. Chayyim in

1524/5. This text they both took to be in general identical with the text of Ben Asher. HEIDENHEIM had pointed out the rules for setting Metheg in his book "*Mishpete ha-Teamim*", Rödelheim 1808. BAER published a new edition of these rules in the German language "*Die Metheg-Setzung nach ihren überlieferten Gesetzen dargestellt*" (in A. Merx' "*Archiv für wissenschaftliche Erforschung des Alten Testaments*", Vol. I, 1869). These rules, however, were worked out on the basis of the only manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible available to Heidenheim and Baer at that time, and these were without exception of a late date. But both were firmly convinced that they had found the very rules according to which Ben Asher himself had arranged the correct reading of the text. Baer used to regard all manuscripts of the Bible that did not set Metheg in accordance with the rules laid down by Heidenheim and himself as if they did not belong to the school of Ben Asher. Hence his condemnation of the Ben Asher Codices.

The method followed by Baer in dealing with Masoretic material can be illustrated by the way in which he manipulated his editions. AHRON B. ASHER had composed a Masoretic treatise "*Dikduke ha-Teamim*" in which he had laid down certain rules for reading and cantillating the text of the Hebrew Bible. The rules certainly refer to the Ben Asher text and *not* to the Ben Chayyim text, and our chief source for the treatise is the Leningrad Ben Asher Bible of A. D. 1008, of which we have spoken. But Baer supposed the whole material collected by him from various sources to be a unity, and as the texts collected by him agreed neither with each other nor with the text Baer believed to be the text of Ben Asher, he selected from them what he regarded as "correct" and that which differed he declared to be "corrupt", "incomplete" or "in confusion". We can hardly agree that with such methods old and difficult Masoretic texts can be edited in a satisfactory way.

Baer however not only *selected* what he regarded as the "correct" text, but also freely *altered* readings of his manuscripts when they did not give readings which he regarded as "correct". In his editions of Biblical texts which he edited with Franz Delitzsch he quoted a great number of differences between Ben Asher and Ben Naftali from a Masoretic compendium called "*Adat De-borim*" of which only one manuscript is known which is in Leningrad. A

careful examination of these quotations with the manuscript from which they had been taken makes it clear that hardly any of these quotations was in accordance with the manuscript. Baer had altered nearly all of them and had brought them into a form which he regarded as the "correct" Ben Asher text. Franz Delitzsch was greatly impressed by Baer's great familiarity with Masoretic material but did not become aware of his methods, and thus covered Baer's pseudo-editions with his authority.

Under these conditions we need not wonder that Wickes also was impressed by Baer and declared the colophons of valuable old manuscripts of the Bible to be fabrications, because the texts of these manuscripts did not follow the rules which Baer believed to be those of Ben Asher, and that Neubauer did not dare to say anything against the decisions of Baer and Wickes.

YUSIF OF CONSTANTINOPLE, who had composed the Masoretic compendium "*Adat Deborim*" about 1060, had incorporated into it a great part of a book on the differences between Ben Asher and Ben Naftali, which had been composed by MISHAEL B. UZZIEL in the 10th century. No complete manuscript of this book is preserved, but it has been possible to one of my pupils, Dr. Lazarus Lipschütz, to restore the whole text of the book from fragments in Leningrad and Paris and from quotations in "*Adat Deborim*". Mishael first enumerates eight general rules for the differences of the two Masoretes, and gives then a list of more than 800 instances from all books of the Bible, in which the little details of the differences in the readings of the two Masoretes are given. So the book is an excellent test for Ben Asher and for Ben Naftali manuscripts. Mishael was a great expert in the readings of these two Masoretes. He indicates, for instance, a vocalisation which one or the other of these Masoretes used in his earlier years and which he corrected into a slightly different vocalisation in later years.

A careful examination of the Leningrad manuscript of A.D. 1008/9 on the basis of the test passages indicated by Mishael shows that in about 95 per cent of cases quoted the manuscript retained in all the little details the readings given by Mishael as those of Ahron b. Asher. The statement of the copyist, that he had copied a manuscript prepared by Ahron ben Asher, was therefore confirmed in an excellent way, and the Masoretic text which I have

published in the third edition of R. Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* on the basis of this manuscript, Stuttgart 1937, must be regarded as a reliable Ben Asher text.

The British Museum MS. Or. 4445, incomplete at the beginning and the end, containing now Gen. 39, 20 to Dt. 1, 33, is connected with the name of Ben Asher in so far as in the margin "the great master Ben Asher" is mentioned several times, and since he is mentioned without the eulogistic formula, we must suppose that the Masoretic notes in the margin were written during his life time. Ginsburg had seen that the punctuation of the Codex differed in a certain way from that of the Ben Chayyim text and he had the impression that it was older than that in the Ben Chayyim text. But as Ginsburg had no doubt that Ben Chayyim had published the Ben Asher text, he made the suggestion that consonants and punctuation were written a hundred years before Ben Asher (A.D. 820–850) and that the Masora in the Codex was added in Ben Asher's time. In support of this suggestion, Ginsburg pointed out some features in the writing of the consonants which he had not found in other manuscripts and which he believed to indicate so early a date. But Ginsburg was not acquainted with really old manuscripts of the Bible, and did not know that the same characteristics were to be found in nearly all codices written in the 10th and 11th centuries of which we know. I may refer here to plates 17–30 of *Masoreten des Westens*, vol. I, 1927. A careful examination of the punctuation of this codex on the basis of the instances quoted by Mishael b. Uzziel shows that the codex was a real Ben Asher Codex, but with readings indicated by Mishael as those of Ahron b. Asher in his earlier years.

The third Codex examined on the basis of the differences indicated by Mishael was the Cairo Codex of the Prophets, written, as we have seen, by Moshe b. Asher in A.D. 895 in Tiberias. The result of this examination was that this codex never had the little details indicated by Mishael as characteristics of Ahron b. Asher. It was clear that these little details of the text were worked out by the son, not by the father. The Cairo Codex represents a form of text from which Ahron b. Asher started. The British Museum manuscript is a specimen of a text developed in the earlier time, the Leningrad Codex a copy of a text developed in the later time of Ahron b. Asher's activity.

It is a great advantage that we are now certain of the standard codices of

the Hebrew Bible prepared by the most prominent Masoretes of Tiberias shortly before and after A. D. 900. These Masoretes had fixed every detail of pronunciation and accentuation of the Hebrew text with the greatest care, and hardly any mistake will be found in the Masora added to the text of the Bible in these manuscripts. How poor — if compared with these manuscripts — was the material at the disposal of Yakob ben Chayyim, how unimportant the manuscripts with the help of which Seligmann Baer tried to "correct" the text of Ben Chayyim in his own editions which he published together with Franz Delitzsch. Among the 73 manuscripts used by Ginsburg for his greater edition of the Bible there was only the British Museum manuscript of the Tora which belonged to these standard texts, and the real nature of this had been completely miscalculated by Ginsburg. The Masoretes of Tiberias, who created these standard texts, regarded themselves — as we have seen — as the "chiefs of righteousness", as the "men of faith", they were convinced that they had established the text of the Hebrew Bible in its integrity, and with Maimonides we have to see in these standard texts the best, the most faithful development of the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible available.

To form an idea of the work really done by these Masoretes we must however try to study manuscripts of the Bible which preceded the time of these Masoretes. The very complicated system of punctuation developed by them must have had its history. This system of punctuation was developed in Palestine. We know that another centre of Jewish scholarly life, a very important one, existed in Babylonia. Lists preserved in the Masora show that there were some differences in the Biblical text read in Palestine and in Babylonia. These differences are confined to the consonantal text; they existed in the text of the Prophets and of the Hagiographa only, not in the text of the Tora, and they were not very great.

In the beginning of the last century, an interesting manuscript of the Later Prophets was discovered, now preserved in the Russian Public Library at Leningrad, Cod. B. 3, the famous Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus. It was contemporary with the standard text prepared in Tiberias (dated A. D. 916), but provided with another system of punctuation. Apart from the outer appearance, however, it hardly differed materially from the text of the standard

codices of Tiberias, and it is due to this fact alone that it survived. Hebrew manuscripts imported from Yemen showed the same kind of punctuation, but in a simpler form. They completely depend upon the Tiberian text of the Bible, and for this text they are of no special value.

Conditions changed completely when, about 50 years ago, the rich material from a Geniza from Old Cairo was brought to the Libraries of Europe and America. Here, besides invaluable material of other kind, fragments of manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible were preserved in very great number, and among these there were many which were several centuries older than anything that was known before. Here we have really the remnants of manuscripts of the Bible which were used in Babylonia and in Palestine during the centuries preceding the time when the Masoretes of Tiberias prepared their standard codices. It allows us to look beyond the complicated system of punctuation elaborated by them.

Especially great is the number of Babylonian fragments of the Bible. I know of remnants of more than 120 different manuscripts which had been written in Babylonia. A list of the Biblical texts preserved in these fragments is given in the Prelogomena to R. Kittel's "Biblia Hebraica", Stuttgart 1937, p. XXX—XXXIII. Facsimiles of more than 80 of these fragments are published in *Masoreten des Ostens*, Leipzig, 1913, Tafel 1—16, and in *Die hebräischen Bibelhandschriften aus Babylonien*, Giessen 1928, Tafel 1—70 (*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Vol. 46, 1928). The manuscripts to which these fragments belonged, are of very different kind. Some of them show a very simple system of punctuation. The vowel signs used in the oldest of these fragments are closely connected with the method of vocalisation which we find in Eastern manuscripts of the Syriac Bible. They consist of one point, or two points in different positions and the vowel signs were added to the consonantal text in such cases only where a wrong pronunciation of the consonants of a Hebrew word was to be avoided. Later on small Hebrew letters or parts of letters were introduced for some of the vowel signs. Only distinctive accents were used by Babylonian Masoretes, and most of them were also indicated by little Hebrew letters or parts of them. A special kind of Masora was developed in Babylonia, distinctly different from the

Masora used in Palestine, and even the method of adding these notes to the text was different. The "Masora parva" was added between the lines, above the word to which it belonged. The "Masora magna" is to be found in the margins of the text, beside the line to which it belonged. As hardly two manuscripts were punctuated in exactly the same way, the great amount of material preserved enables us to study the development of this kind of punctuation in all details.

In the course of time a more complicated system of punctuation was developed in Babylonia. A great number of new vowel signs was introduced, some of them used in syllables which had no stress, others indicating vowels which were followed by a doubled consonant, and the whole method of punctuation was improved, so that the Babylonian Masoretes were able to indicate every little detail of pronunciation and cantillation of the text of the Bible, just as their colleagues in Tiberias. As here also hardly two manuscripts were punctuated in exactly the same way, we may study the development of this system in every detail. This complicated system of punctuation was lastly influenced strongly by the Tiberian system. The famous Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus, of which we have spoken, still shows the Babylonian vowel signs, but is provided with the Tiberian Masora, and adapted in all details to the Tiberian text of the Bible in such a degree, that it can no longer be regarded as a representative of a real Babylonian manuscript.

A simple system of vocalisation was used in Palestine also. It preceded the later one developed by the Tiberian Masoretes and differed from it in the form of the signs used. We call it the *Palestinian* system (*nikkud eres Yisrael*): the specific Palestinian character of this system is shown by the fact that it is very similar to that used by the Samaritans in some of their manuscripts of the Tora and in other writings.

The remnants of only six manuscripts of the Bible with this system of vocalisation are known. But there is no doubt that it was widely used in Palestine at a certain time. We find it used in quite different texts, in manuscripts of the Targum (Palestinian Targum of the Tora), the Palestinian Midrash, the Mishna, the Masora, and especially in manuscripts with liturgical texts. The punctuation used in these texts differs in many details; there are hardly two

texts punctuated in exactly the same way, and as in the case of the systems mentioned above, by studying these fragments we can follow the development of this kind of punctuation also.

The two simple systems of punctuation differ in many respects from each other, and we can find in them interesting parallels to Hebrew texts in Greek and Latin transcript, and to the method of pronouncing Hebrew as used by the Samaritans.

The introduction of more complicated methods of punctuation seems to have taken place at about the same time in Babylonia and in Palestine. It was connected with the special interest attached to the study of the Bible by the Karaites. The oldest Tiberian Masoretes of whom we hear were contemporaries of the founder of the Karaite movement in the middle of the 8th century. At that time we may date the beginning of their activity. The result of their work is to be seen in the standard codices of the Bible of which we have spoken, written shortly before or after 900 A.D.

As long as no vocalised Hebrew texts were known which were older than those prepared by the Masoretes of Tiberias, it was quite impossible to look beyond their system of punctuation. This system stood before us like a miracle: Nobody was able to say how it came into being, nobody how it was developed: One explanation only could be given for it, and has really been given, as we have seen. This pronunciation was handed down by the Masoretes exactly as it had been transmitted to them, and by a long chain of trustworthy transmitters every guarantee was given that it was fixed by the Masoretes exactly as it had been read from time immemorial.

The Masoretes did everything to foster this idea. It was certainly a part of their work that all remnants of older Hebrew texts of the Bible disappeared. The Masoretes were concerned to ensure that only the punctuation and cantillation fixed by them should survive, so that, looking backwards from their final achievement, it would appear that the text created by them had been transmitted in this very way always, everywhere, by everybody.

The material preserved in the Geniza allows us to look beyond these complicated systems. A careful study of this material shows a distinct difference between the pronunciation of Hebrew before and after the activity of the

Masoretes. We can clearly recognise that the Masoretes have replaced a pronunciation of Hebrew which they regarded as lax, as inaccurate, by a pronunciation which they believed to be the correct one. They have created an ideal Hebrew, which they reconstructed — as we can prove now by facts — on the analogy of similar efforts, made at nearly the same time, but under somewhat different conditions, by the Arabic Readers of the Koran, and by the Syrian Masoretes. They may have been convinced, that this ideal Hebrew was the very language which was spoken in classical times. To this ideal Hebrew the text of the Hebrew Bible was adapted. In this way the uniform text was created, which is the one we find to day in our Hebrew Bible.

The problem how far the complicated punctuation of the Masoretes is based on real tradition, how far many details of it were newly created by the Masoretes, is hardly discussed. The authors of Hebrew grammars are generally satisfied when they rediscover the rules, according to which the Masoretes reconstructed their ideal Hebrew. They do not see the vicious circle in which they move¹.

We were accustomed to confine the activity of the Masoretes to an obstinate clinging to the smallest details of what was transmitted to them. The material preserved in the Geniza shows clearly that their activity was of a quite different character, and may help us to arrive at a truly historical understanding of the important work done by these men.

¹ For further study of the problems discussed here I may refer to my book "The Cairo Genizah" (The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1941), London 1947. A German edition of the book will be published soon. The second lecture is devoted to "The Hebrew Text of the Bible".

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